

Matthew 28

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[0 : 00] Starting at verse 1. After the Sabbath at dawn, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow.

The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 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. Then 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. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

[1 : 03] Suddenly Jesus met them. Greetings, he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.

Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, You are to say, His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.

If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

[2 : 05] Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. This is the word of the Lord. Let's speak to God. Thank you.

I'm just about to invite you. Things started a very long time ago. And it's the fourth of a series of sermons, each based on one chapter of a book called Lifted by Sam Albury.

So tonight we're on the last chapter. And so what I'm saying is very loosely based on his chapter on resurrection and mission. And so he can't be blamed, you know, for the errors that I make.

But I've certainly found his book helpful. So as we look at the resurrection and mission tonight, it's clear that the resurrection is the great game changer.

[3 : 17] Everything is different after the resurrection. I'm not going to go through the early part of the chapter. I'm going to look at the, just really at the last few verses.

But I want, I think as we get to these verses, this chapter, we realise how everything changes when we come to these last verses. In the rest of Matthew, Jesus is essentially going and speaking to Jews.

That's not entirely true. But basically his mission is to the Jewish people. We can obviously find exceptions. We can find the Syrophoenician woman.

But she comes to him and then her child is marvellously healed. So I'm not going to look at the first half of the chapter, except to look at one thing I want to pick out.

And that's in verses 7 and verse 10. Verse 7. And in verse 10, It's very clear from those two verses that something very special is going to take place in Galilee.

[4 : 45] They can't just wait for Pentecost in Jerusalem. They have to set off on an expedition. Galilee is their destination. Now we're not told why Galilee.

It's clear there's a symbolic significance. It's clearly important. Galilee was north of Jerusalem. It was the place where invading forces would tend to hit.

Though it was lush and fertile, it became known as the land of the shadow of death. Yet in this place of darkness, Isaiah had a vision of a new light dawning.

In chapter 9 verse 1, Isaiah said that in the future, God will honour Galilee of the nations. So it seems that rather than being the place of invasion by the Gentiles, it was to be the place from which light would go to them.

It had already been that place in the sense that Jesus had come into Galilee and had preached in Galilee. But now it's going to be the springboard from this mountain.

[5 : 59] The disciples are going to go out and share the good news throughout the world. So the risen Jesus calls the disciples to start off a new phase of their ministry.

And they go to a mountain. Now mountains are very important. Those who know me well know I love mountains. Monroe's are my favourite topic.

But mountains are important in the Bible too. There's Mount Sinai. There's the Mount of the Sermon on the Mount.

There's the Mount of the Transfiguration. We're not actually told which this mountain is. It just seems to be obvious to the disciples as to where to go.

The mountain where Jesus had told them to go. Now, I mean, Sinai was important because that was where the Old Testament law was given. The mountain where the Sermon was given gave Jesus' teaching for living.

[7 : 07] The Mount of the Transfiguration gave evidence to the disciples as to who Jesus is. And now this mountain is one from which they set off.

To bring the good news throughout the world. Note the sadness of the story in a way. Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee.

We've had a whole gospel where the twelve did things. But of course Judas isn't there anymore. And Matthias hasn't yet joined them and nor has Paul. So there's just eleven.

Notice the strange description of what happens when they get to the mountain. When they saw him, they worshipped him.

Well, indeed so. There isn't Jesus. That's not the strange thing. But some doubted. What does that word mean? Distadzo?

[8 : 07] It's only used once elsewhere in the New Testament. It's in chapter 14, verse 31. But you don't need to look it up. It's a very well-known passage. I'll read it to you. When Peter began to sink, Jesus reached out to him.

Rescued him and said, You of little faith, why did you doubt? So I don't think... That's that last word there. So I don't think it means a settled unbelief.

It's a state of uncertainty and hesitation. I think they saw him, perhaps at a distance. Because later on it says, then Jesus came to them.

They saw him, perhaps at a distance. They worshipped him, but some hesitated. They weren't unreasonably credulous. But they were convinced.

And all of them went off and headed to the ends of the earth for Jesus. So Jesus came, verse 18, to them.

[9 : 12] Came closer, I think. And gave them their commission. Before he gave them what we call the great commission, we have the great claim.

Jesus said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Now Jesus always had all authority.

And if I'm not careful, I can get myself tied up into some sort of theological tangle. But I'm going to try and avoid that. He'd always had all authority. But now as the risen one, his authority shines out.

What he's saying is it doesn't matter where we go. He has authority. It's not just in this building, where I hope we're aware of his authority.

He has authority over my office, where I find it so hard to speak of him. He has authority over our families, if we find them places where it's difficult to speak.

[10 : 15] Think of Jonah, running away to Tarshish, to get away from God. But Jesus has authority over Tarshish, over Nineveh, over Jerusalem.

It's interesting, it says, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Do you remember how near the beginning of the gospel, the devil offered him the kingdoms of this world, if only Jesus would worship him?

But the Father gives the Son authority, not only over the earth, but over heaven itself. All authority. Because Jesus has died for us, and the Father has raised him from the dead.

Jesus has all authority, authority, over London, or New York, over those sort of big places, where important things seem to happen.

He has authority there. In those days, I suppose the equivalent would perhaps be Rome, to which Paul went.

[11 : 30] The equivalent would be, perhaps you may think of authority in the university. And perhaps the equivalent then might have been Athens. And I want to have, a few verses are going to come up on the screen for us.

And I want to look at them as well. I'm going to read, these are the final words of Paul's speech on the Areopagus in Athens.

And I'll read them out. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image made by human design, and skill.

In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people, everywhere, to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.

He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. As I said at the beginning, the resurrection is the great game changer.

[12 : 36] It's the thing that's changed everything. Can we just keep Acts up for now? Can we just go back to it? It's vanished. I want to look at several different things from it.

In the past, Paul says, God overlooked their idolatry. Now, the resurrection has made all the difference.

Post-resurrection, Jesus has been confirmed as the judge of all. And the date of that judgment has been fixed. And he says, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

When we get back to Matthew, we'll find that there are four alls in the passage. You've probably had that pointed out to you before. But here there are three alls. It doesn't really pick out all that well.

All people, everywhere, and everyone. They're all much the same in the Greek. I mean, the first one's a pantas, pantakou. Perhaps if we'd translated the first one, everyone, we'd have solved the problem.

[13 : 41] And they would all sound the same. They're all the same word. It's the universality of what happens after the resurrection. We move from Jesus going around Galilee or Jerusalem, talking with a relatively small number of people, building his little community of disciples.

After the resurrection, it's all different. They go out from Galilee throughout the world. Twenty years later, St. Paul has reached Athens.

Then he's on his way to Rome. They've moved out because they followed the command we're going to think about in a moment. So back to Matthew.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, says Jesus. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

They can go to all nations. We can go to all nations because, as I've just said, Jesus has authority everywhere. As Paul puts it, he's coming back as judge.

[14 : 50] Now we have to explain the way to repent to all people. There's one other cross-reference. I do want the Daniel one now, please, to come up, which I think is important.

Just two cross-references this evening. I'll read Daniel 7, these two verses. Daniel has this vision, centuries before Jesus, of one like a son of man, of Jesus, who is given authority and all nations worship him.

That's the picture, I think, that's there in the background. Jesus is seen here as the son of man, as Daniel had seen beforehand.

And what are disciples? Well, I think disciples are both learners and followers. There are things to learn, but we don't learn just so that we can pass an exam in theology or in Bible knowledge.

We learn so that we can actually follow and walk with Jesus. and if it involves both learning and following, then making disciples of all nations involves two things.

[16 : 41] Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. Just to make sure I have another all.

So there are two different things. Baptism and teaching. Sacrament and word.

And baptism is into the name entering into an allegiance to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's interesting that there's one name.

It's not the names, it's the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Note that witness to the doctrine of the Trinity. It's interesting that at the very beginning of Matthew's Gospel, near the beginning, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all involved in Jesus' baptism.

The Son, very obviously, he's the one being baptized. But the Father is the one who speaks, the voice comes from heaven and the Spirit comes down like a dove.

[17 : 50] and we're baptizing people into the name, which means into the presence and into the power of God.

And we teach them to obey everything. It's always interesting, I think, how much teaching is stressed. when I was a young person, I think, there was an awful lot of stress on pastoral ministry.

I'm not decrying that, of course. But, it's interesting how much here they're told to teach. If you look at the description of the overseer, called in more traditional translations, the bishop, in 1 Timothy, we find a whole description of all the holy character that the bishop must have.

And there's only one other characteristic, one gift, he must have ability to teach. It's interesting, of course, that I think up to now, up to this point in the story, Jesus had been the teacher.

Now, he says, you go and teach. He says that, obviously, to the apostles. But it comes down to us to teach people to obey everything I've commanded you.

[19 : 20] So, we study. We study tonight in church. We study as we read our Bibles on our own. We study as we go to roots or to, we go to growth group.

We study so that we know what to pass on to others. But it's also true that we study so that we can teach people not to know everything he said, although that would be good, but to obey everything he commanded, which is much more challenging.

It's not just a question of knowledge. It's a question of going and doing and acting. All authority, all nations, all I commanded you.

and surely I'm with you always to the very end of the age. I wonder what the disciples were thinking.

Remember how Mary Magdalene reached out to Jesus in the garden and he said, do not cling to me. me. It's clear that Jesus was moving on.

[20 : 42] Jesus was risen. He was the same Jesus, but he wasn't going to live with them in the same way as he had done during his 30 years before the cross.

Yet, at the very end of the gospel, he says, surely I am with you always. These last verses started with a great claim. They've included a great commission.

And now, finally, we have a great comfort. In a way, it pulls the whole gospel together. Because at the very beginning, as we often say at Christmas, Matthew told us that Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us.

now, the risen Jesus, the risen and ascended Jesus, will be God with us. And he'll be with us especially as we seek to make disciples, which we find so hard.

He's with us particularly as we go out from this place to seek to do his will. He's with us literally all the days. There is a perfectly good Greek word for always.

[22 : 08] If you're at St. Andrew's, you probably know it. I.N. Aristuane, that's the first bit always to be the best, St. Andrew's University motto. They now translate it differently to avoid sounding quite so arrogant.

I was at St. Andrew's too. St. But this is the same word. This is actually all the days. Whether this particular reference is back to Psalm 23, all the days of my life, that's the same phrase as we find in the Greek of Psalm 23.

Whether that's significant or not, I don't know. But the point is, it's a fourth all. That's the thing that excites me. Jesus is with us always, by his spirit.

So that's really what I wanted to say. What we see in this passage, and just as much when Paul was in Athens, we see that the resurrection has changed everything.

We're moving out, we're going from here, to anywhere, because anywhere that we go, Jesus is there with us, with authority.

[23 : 29] There are people to find him, to be baptized and to be taught. Starting from Galilee, but not staying there.

As a church, we have our motto, reach, grow, send. We seek to reach others, leading to baptism.

We seek to teach one another, and thereby to grow. And we seek to send people out, to tell others, in all nations, knowing the presence of Jesus with us and with them, wherever we go, till he returns at the end of the age.

Let's pray as we sit. Lord Jesus, we get excited when we read the story of Easter again, excited to know that everything changed on that first Easter day, that all the disappointment and horror of Good Friday have been brought through, and that Jesus was alive again, and now calling us to tell others about him everywhere, to know his presence.

Help us to be bold. Come, Holy Spirit, touch our hearts, and enable us to speak of you, Lord Jesus, because you are there.

[25 : 27] Amen. Amen.