

Sunday April 12, 2020  
Lesson 7: Jesus' Resurrection  
Scripture: Matthew 28: 1-10

**Context:**

The next part of our focus on salvation is the account of Jesus' resurrection in the gospel of Matthew. In this account, the main characters include Mary Magdalene and another Mary, an angel, and Jesus. This gospel is similar to the account found in the gospels of Luke and Mark with hints of the gospel of John included such as Jesus appearing to people immediately post resurrection.

The text picks up from the crucifixion and death of Jesus to take us three days after the burial. The text opens up with Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary." Many scholars assert this is Mary the mother of Jesus as there is a reference to Mary, the brother of James and Joseph in Matthew 27:56.<sup>1</sup> We do not know why they are at the tomb unless we give the same reasoning from Mark and Luke of them going to anoint the body.

The visit is interrupted by a great earthquake and an angel descends to sit upon the stone which guarded the tomb. The soldiers guarding the tomb become like dead men. Part of the reason for the inclusion of this part of the story is to negate a Jewish rumor that the disciples had stolen the corpse.<sup>2</sup> Matthew secures any doubt of Jesus' resurrection with an account of no witnesses.

When the women see the angel, they are told not be afraid for Jesus has been risen from the dead. Their job is to tell the disciples so Jesus will later meet them in Galilee. As the women leave the tomb with great joy and fear, Jesus meets them. He greets them and they bow down to worship him.

This account of Jesus and the two women meeting is very similar to the Gospel of John where it is Mary Magdalene who meets Jesus in the garden. The word for the greeting is the customary Hellenistic *chairete*, which roughly means "Peace be with you."<sup>3</sup> The verb though can also mean to "rejoice."<sup>4</sup> Jesus is giving them permission to celebrate his resurrection and it goes beyond the simple: "Greetings."

There is one difference from the other gospels when it comes to Jesus' message for the disciples. The word "disciples" is replaced by "brothers," indicating Jesus had forgiven the ten who abandoned him and the one who had denied him.<sup>5</sup> Jesus is ready to embrace even those who had failed in their job as students. Yet he loves them as kin.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas R.A. Hare, "Matthew," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 2009), 330.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

Resurrection changes things.

**Application:**

One thing I noticed throughout this text was the repetition of the word “fear.” There was fear all over the place. The women were afraid of the angel and what they saw. The women were afraid and joyous when they saw Jesus risen from the dead. Jesus tells them when they go back to the disciples to not be afraid. Just three times in ten short verses do we hear how fear can even be mixed in with joy.

Fear is one of the most powerful and visceral feelings. It doesn't take much for any of us to remember a time when we felt fear creep into our lives. If you haven't, rest assured fear will find you in some form of fashion.

Yet the constant refrain of the biblical text is “Do not be afraid.” Whether it is one of the prophets or one of the Pauline letters, there is the repetitive phrase of “do not be afraid.” God knows the human condition enough to know this due counsel is sorely needed.

The Easter story reminds us of how salvation is a gift to the power of fear. Fear can be a powerful motivator. Sometimes I have heard people greatly struggle with the question of if they are acceptable to God and if the state of their souls points them to salvation. And I have heard others take advantage of people, using fear and guilt to force them to do things in order to achieve salvation. Fear has unfortunately become used as a tool to coerce or command people, even in the realm of faith.

Yet Jesus' resurrection flies in the face of fear to remind us of the power of God. If Jesus can be risen from the dead, can God not see past our paltry attempts to achieve our salvation and allay our fears? God is in the business of taking out our fears and reminding us they do not hold any power over us.

In our current status around the world, there is a lot of fear. People are afraid of the ramifications of the long-term effects of a virus. There is a valid concern for all the potential hundreds of thousands of victims of the virus. We are greatly concerned about the economy, the medical community, and the leaders who must make hard decisions about what needs to be done.

I think these fears and concerns are valid. We should be concerned about the future and what happens if we do not heed the counsel of leaders and the medical community. There should be the motivating factor of fear to help us take the proper precautions in responding to the spread of the virus. And of course we should lament how the virus has shaped our life currently from the grief of not being able to worship corporately or spend time with the people we love in person.

Yet the story of Easter reminds us that mixed in with the fears of the world there is also joy on Easter morning. We may mourn not being able to be together and yet we will still celebrate in the midst of death, our Lord rose from the dead. In the midst of grief and anxiety, our Lord is telling us to not allow the fear to overwhelm us. Our Lord will be with us in the midst of fear and confusion, giving hope to all. Jesus showed up in the midst of fear to give life even when there was still fear and anxiety all around.

What are moments you wonder about salvation? What things give you the most fear in this life? What does hope mean to you especially on Easter? Have you simultaneously felt both fear and joy? How do you praise God in the midst of times

where there is fear and confusion?

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