

EASTER 2016
RISEN! Life Conquers Death
Matthew 28:1-8; John 11

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 28:1-8

The Bible opens with these words — *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. No apologetic for the existence of God; just a profound and sweeping declaration that **He is** — and that **He is Creator**. But the rest of the first 2 chapters of *Genesis* pull back the curtain and reveal to us His nature and His intentions in creation. We discover that He is not only eternal in His existence and infinite in His power; He is also infinite in humility — and that the infinite God is at heart a servant as we see Him prepare the earth, and especially the Garden of Eden, for human occupancy. Finally He created man. He was (in a manner of speaking) pleased to create the universe from a distance; merely speaking it into existence. But He would not create man from a distance. The creation of man was something incredibly intimate because God wanted to be intimate with man. So God rolled up His sleeves (if-you-would), and *formed* man from the dust. He made us male and female in his image and likeness. *The God of glory* made us to bear His image in the world; reflect His glory in His creation. Having made man, God spoke with him. In that we see both the nature of God and His intentions concerning man. We see that God is personal. We see that from the beginning it was God's intention to have a relationship of love and communication with us. Then God blessed creation; blessed our first parents. In that we see the giving nature of God — that He is generous and gracious. God walked with man and enjoyed man fully and perfectly in a perfect creation. Man walked with God, bearing the image of God; reflecting the glory of God and served God. Man fully enjoyed God in a perfect creation. There was no such thing as hunger, suffering, pain or death.

But ever since *Genesis 3* our world has not looked ANYTHING like that. Everyone agrees that the world as we know it is not the way it should be. It's broken.

The Bible tells us that ALL of the pain — pathos — brokenness — injustice and carnage we see in the world can be traced back to the moment when (as D.A. Carson so aptly frames it) man de-godded God; when man decided to put himself in the place of God. In that very moment DEATH entered the world.

Romans 5:12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone,

Immediately man died spiritually. His sin separated him from God — who was the source of his life. Eventually man died physically. Man was now in bondage to sin and death — and man was powerless to fix himself. The eternal and temporal casualties of sin are beyond our comprehension. There was nothing that wasn't ravaged by sin and idolatry. The spiritual — the moral — the emotional — the physical

— and even the environmental landscape of this world was horribly broken. Death had power over all of creation. Death invaded the plant world and the animal world. Death touched man — aging, illness, physical suffering and eventually biological death. All of the pain, pathos, brokenness, injustice and carnage we see in the world can be traced back to the moment man chose to worship something other than God — the moment that man de-godded God.

So there was man — spiritually dead, separated from His creator, in the process of dying physically, living in a world that was now in the grip of entropy and decay — and utterly powerless in the face of sin and death. Upon pronouncing judgment upon sin God immediately announced Good News ([Genesis 3:14-15](#)). He promises the coming of Jesus. This is what theologians call the “Proto-Evangelion.” This is so absolutely amazing and radical! The first gospel proclamation is undertaken by God Himself. God is into evangelism — God preaches the first Gospel message. God promises that through Eve there will eventually come a man who will do war with Satan. Satan will harm him — but He will come as the great dragon slayer — and He will defeat the dragon. **It's a promise of the coming of Jesus!**

Since [Genesis 3](#) Satan has without ceasing and with perfect hatred waged war against the worship of God on this planet. He has sought to turn man from the God of glory and keep man from living for the glory of God. He labors in every square inch of this globe to keep man living in the darkness of idolatry.

But ever since [Genesis 3](#) God amplified this promise — multiplied the proclamations of how He was going to destroy the works of the devil, deliver man from his great enemies of sin and death, and redeem His fallen creation. Every one of those promises was pointing to the day when God Himself would step into the fray of this war that was being waged against Him and the souls of man.

We celebrate His coming into the world at Christmas. On Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Jesus — born of a virgin, just as God promised in Genesis 3. God came in human flesh (in carnare)

***John 1:1; 14; 18** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

***Matthew 1:23** Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”(which means, God with us).*

He was **fully** with us.

***Colossians 2:9** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*

When He became a man He didn't hide from man, or retreat from man. He wanted to be with fallen men and women when they laughed and were glad — that's why we find Jesus performing His first miracle

at a wedding. He wanted to be with fallen men and women when they were sick and needy — that's why we see Him healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, cleansing lepers, and feeding the hungry. He wanted to be with men and women when they were sorrowful and broken in the face of death — that's why we find Jesus at three funerals.

One of them was for one of His dearest friends — a man named Lazarus. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. It is at THAT funeral that we see just how God feels about death.

***John 11:33** When Jesus saw her weeping (Mary), and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled**.*

greatly troubled = indignant, enraged, and violently displeased

Jesus was indignant, enraged, and violently displeased **by death**. In **Genesis 2:16-17** God clearly declared to Adam and Eve that if they sinned they would die. That is because God is life — and when we walk away from God, we walk away from life. Paul tells us in the book of Romans the *wages of sin is death*. He says we have **earned death**. But then Paul says — *the gift of God is eternal life*. **Death is earned — Life is given**. We have **all earned** death because *all have sinned*. Had there not been sin there would not be death.

DON'T MISS THIS — There in **John 11** we see the Creator God of **Genesis 2**. He has become man. Only He isn't walking in a perfect Garden — perfect creation. He is walking in a graveyard — surrounded by silence. There are no sounds of life there! He had created man to live. Man sinned — Death came by sin. He sees Mary and Martha broken and grieving! He sees tears flowing down the cheeks of loved ones. His dear friend is dead and in the grave. Jesus was indignant, enraged, and violently displeased **because the pathos** of that scene is **the consequence of sin**.

Jesus was indignant, enraged, and violently displeased at the reality of how **sin had wrecked His crowning workmanship**. There in those tombs lay the **decaying remains** of what He had **so fearfully and wonderfully made!** That which He had **originally stamped** with the words — *"very good"* — is now **ruined and rotting!**

QUOTE: John Ross Macduff, *Memories of Bethany*
Sin had converted the fairest province of His creation into one vast Necropolis, one dismal "city of the dead!"

QUOTE: John Ross Macduff — *If the Architect mourns over the destruction of some favorite structure which the storm has swept down, or the fire has reduced to ashes — if the Sculptor mourns to see his breathing marble hurled to the ground, and its fragments scattered at his feet — what must have been the sensations of the mighty Architect of the human frame, at whose completion the morning stars and the sons of God chanted a loud anthem — what must have been His sensations as He thought of them, now a devastated wreck, dissolving*

in decay, and death — holding high holiday over a world held in death's grip!

John 11:34-35 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus wept.

The maker of the eye saw a cemetery. The maker of emotions knew the pain of a dear friend dying. The maker of the tear duct wept as He stood before the tomb of His friend. In the tears of Jesus we see that **God's heart is wrecked with anguish** for a fallen world! He cries over the reality of sin — the reality of death — for what sin and death did to His friend Lazarus.

In Jesus we see that there **really is a God** — and He **really does care!** **The Gospels record** for us the moment in which Jesus looked over Jerusalem and there He wept **for** the nation and the destruction that was to come upon them (Luke 19:41-44). And here — on the way to a friend's grave He weeps **with** those who grieve. What an incredible Savior. Weeping not just **for** us in our sin — but **with** us in our suffering.

The **tenderness of His Humanity** is revealed in those tear drops falling from a **human eye** on a **human grave**. The **majesty of His Deity** is manifested in His ability to **take in with one grasp** — the pathos and suffering of fallen world. There in the village of Bethany, in the 1st century AD, Jesus had all OUR sorrows before Him. He had all of YOUR sorrows before Him. And as He beheld it — **"Jesus wept!"**

John 11:38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.

Once again — Jesus is outraged, indignant, enraged, and violently displeased. We have to see that Jesus is not just another spectator or mourner. **Jesus is the passionate enemy of death!** He is there to overcome the tyranny of death.

When Jesus first arrived at the tomb he said these words to Martha

John 11:25-27 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

John 11:43-44 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.

WOW! Jesus plundered the grave! Life Conquers death! And in so doing He gives a sneak preview of what would transpire in a Garden Tomb in the very near future. Jesus not only raised Lazarus from the dead — but He was on His way to deal with the CAUSE of death. THAT was the reason He came into this world.

The PURPOSE of Christmas was Good Friday and Easter! He was on His way to deal with the problem of SIN by His death on the cross in our place for our sin. Three days after Jesus died the death we should have died He rose from the grave. **The cross is God's verdict on sin.** As we see Christ nailed to the cross we see sin for what it is: vile — violent — destructive and deadly and deserving of God's wrath! **The resurrection is God's verdict on His Son**

Romans 1:4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead,

In the resurrection Jesus brings the application of what He accomplished on the cross. Sin, the cause of death, is defeated by Jesus! Life conquers death!

Could there be any better news than this! It is such amazing news it seems UNBELIEVABLE! But the Resurrection of Jesus is the very thing that makes the Good News utterly believable — worthy of giving our lives to — worth betting eternity on!

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Without the resurrection of Jesus, **there is no Christianity** — your faith is in vain. There is a sequence of events **that form** the Christian faith. It begins with the Incarnation (God become man in the person of Jesus.) Following from the Incarnation was His sinless life; His death on the cross; His burial and His bodily resurrection from the grave.

To be a Christian means that you believe that God became man; He lived a sinless life — lived the life we should live, but haven't. He died for our sins — He died the death we should die because of our sins.

Hebrews 2:9 Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The cross of Jesus tells us that we are more wicked than we ever feared — yet more loved than we ever hoped. Then having died in our place, for our sins, He physically rose to life, conquering Satan, Sin, Death and Hell.

This is not something that you can remain neutral on. This is something that we hold in the closed hand. It is non negotiable. We won't ever give it up. **You must decide** — *Do I believe Jesus is alive? Or, do I believe that Jesus is dead?* It is the defining feature of what it means to be Christian. Here's why.

FIRST and MOST IMPORTANTLY — The resurrection of Jesus from the grave **GUARANTEES** that His death on the cross actually satisfied the justice of God and can save me from the **POWER** and **PENALTY** of my sin!

Romans 4:24b-25 Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses **and raised for our justification.**

1 Corinthians 15:17 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are **still in your sins.***

Jesus said that He came to *give His life as a ransom* (Matthew 20:28). His last words from the Cross were, *It is finished — PAID IN FULL!* The resurrection stamps PAID IN FULL over the debt of the countless sins of countless sinners since [Genesis 3](#).

SECOND — Only Jesus has died and come back to tell us what awaits us on the other side of death.

QUOTE: N.T. Wright — *“Nobody in the pagan world of Jesus’ day and thereafter actually claimed that somebody had been truly dead and had then come to be truly, and bodily alive once more.”*

No other major world religion has as its founder or leader anyone who is resurrected from death. There is no religion that can tell you what happens to after you die, but Christianity. Jesus alone has died and come back to tell us what awaits us on the other side of death.

There is a real heaven and a real hell. Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone in the Bible. Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for our sins and rose from the grave will live forever in God’s eternal kingdom in a glorified body that will never die, wear out or get sick. Non-Christians will live forever — only for them it will be an eternity of just punishment for the sins they committed — For eternity they will experience conscious, physical, torments in hell with a body that will never die. I’m not supposed to tell you this because it’s not popular. But, it’s true because this is what Jesus, who is the truth, says. You may say – *But other religions disagree.* Those who disagree are with the dead founders and proponents of those religions who are being tormented right now.

DO NOT be short sighted in your thinking. LISTEN — Forever is.... FOREVER! You will spend it with Jesus in blessing, or apart from Jesus in torment. You **will** live forever as a friend of Jesus or a foe of Jesus.

This morning every one of us must face this head on — Do you belong to Jesus or not? Have you given Him your sin, or not? Will you rise to be with Him or not? Have you trusted in Him, or not?

THIRD — The Resurrection of Jesus radically transforms the way I perceive death. Paul says in [1 Corinthians 15](#), that apart from Jesus, death is an enemy. I’m not afraid to die because Jesus conquered death. Death for the believer is not termination — it is not the end!

The Resurrection of Jesus means that you can actually live your life with freedom and joy and passion — knowing that because of the Resurrection Jesus, death is just the entrance to life in the presence of God where there will be no sickness, no pain, no disease, no cancer, no injustice, no evil, no war — Instead there will be Jesus ruling over a

new creation with no curse, with none of the effects of sin — a perfect creation.

LASTLY — The Resurrection of Jesus guarantees that the world that everyone wants is ahead of us — and it's with Jesus.

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

If all of your hope is here, you are HOPELESS! The world will still have the effects of sin and the curse. That's as good as it gets — THEN YOU DIE — with NO HOPE!

If you are not a Christian — you need to know that this world is as close to heaven as you will ever get. But if you become a Christian — this world is the closest to hell you will ever get. And because you know Jesus — you have a LIVING hope because of the resurrection of Jesus!

Our prayer is that you would trust in Jesus and that we would see you there. Our hope is that you would trust in Jesus and that beginning today, you would experience life that is eternal — start to live as a citizen of heaven.

Please repent of your sin. It is separating you from God. It is killing you and it's contributing to the horrific nature of the world. And unless you embrace Jesus — His death in your place and His resurrection from the grave — it will cause you to spend eternity in the conscious eternal torment of hell.

But HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS — The words of the angel — HE IS RISEN — announced the death of death

Date of Death — The first day of the week after Passover in 32 AD

Place of Death — In a Garden

Cause of Death — The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus

LIFE CONQUERED DEATH!

The day is coming for one funeral we want to attend — when death itself will be cast into the lake of fire — all because HE IS RISEN!

