

2021

Week 3: Resurrection in 2021

This is resurrection Sunday! It is the culmination of a journey we have taken from the Gospel of Matthew. This is **one of the eyewitness accounts** of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Three weeks ago we started by reading **Matthew 20** and then chapter 21 last week is the chapter that covers the traditional Palm Sunday story. We called this series 2021 because that's where we started. **But more importantly, we called it 2021 because the rest of the story that Matthew tells couldn't be more important this year.** It couldn't be more applicable or potentially life changing, but that's only because it gets us to today. **Resurrection Sunday is when we celebrate that part of the story that makes the rest of the story matter, particularly in 2021.**

Let's read what Matthew wrote and then passed on to us. **Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. <sup>5</sup> Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He isn't here! He is risen from the dead,**

just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying.<sup>7</sup> And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”<sup>8</sup> The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message.<sup>9</sup> And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him.<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”<sup>11</sup> As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened.<sup>12</sup> A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe.<sup>13</sup> They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’”<sup>14</sup> If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.”<sup>15</sup> So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.<sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy

Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:1-18

This has been a **tough year**. It felt like we were **trapped in our homes** for such a long time. The only thing that got us out of our homes in the beginning was a **500-year flood** where 2 dams collapsed and two lakes disappeared. We had one of the most **divisive campaigns and elections** in history. **A black man was suffocated** by being hogtied and sat on by Police, then a young black woman was wrongfully shot by police. There were peaceful protests and there were full-on riots where people's business and homes were destroyed and some lost their lives. **COVID numbers went down** and then they **went back up**. The **economy went in the tank** as people lost jobs and hope. **And then there were all of the things we love to do that we weren't allowed to do**. Not to mention **masks and vaccinations**, which everyone has an opinion on, just check Facebook. And round it all off with **another mass shooting** in Colorado, followed by the **trial** of the before mentioned police officer.

What a perfect time for life to come out of death, for hope to spring forth from despair. We don't need to rebound and we don't need a comeback, we don't need life to be adjusted or tweaked...**We need a resurrection in 2021 more than ever!** Enter Jesus, as

the first one to walk out of a grave, never to re-enter one. Lazarus did die a second time. Not Jesus.

**Here's what we have to do to experience a real resurrection this Easter. Don't believe the conspiracy theories.**

**There is no shortage of conspiracy theories right now. You can go to the right or the left and find conspiracies. One side has a theory about the other side being involved in a massive human trafficking ring based out of a pizza shop in Washington DC. The other side has a conspiracy theory that the other side wanted to throw out the constitution, start a 2<sup>nd</sup> revolution and crown someone king. These are very tempting because then you have someone to blame for everything but they don't allow us to experience a real resurrection.**

**Back to Jesus' resurrection and the original conspiracy theory was stated that Jesus' followers stole his body. This had to happen in order for the ones who were in charge of Israel politically and religiously to remain in power. There had to be an answer for the question, "Where is Jesus' body?"**

**That original conspiracy leads us to another one that says, "Death is the end, there is nothing else." This one has legs once the original resurrection is discredited. And this one is very much in vogue right**

now. **It is the opposite side of the belief that everyone goes to heaven except really bad people like Hitler, Osama Ben Ladin, Stalin, Jeffery Dahmer and the like. But if you push those people to give you the line between bad and going to hell, and not that bad and getting into heaven they can't define it.**

Here's what the Bible says about the conspiracy theory, that Jesus didn't come out of the grave and, therefore, there isn't anything after the grave. **And if there is no resurrection, "Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!" <sup>33</sup> Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character." <sup>34</sup> Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't know God at all. 1 Corinthians 15:23b-34**

For those who believe in the conspiracy theories **next dispensation, it leads us to all paths are the same, they lead to heaven, just believe.**

**Organized religions are not always different; people have behaved badly in the name of Jesus as well as other religions. But Jesus, he is different from any of the other leaders/founders of the other religions.**

**What makes Jesus different is that he didn't give us a path to get to God through a system of beliefs or good behavior. The theory is that God is up on this**

**giant mountain** and there are all of these different paths like Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam...but they all get you to the top where God is. **Jesus changes the picture by taking on the role of a humble human servant who makes the trip to come get us. He condescended so that we don't have to try to ascend.** And in doing that, Jesus' death created a situation where **justice is served.** The penalty for all of the rotten things I've said, done, or thought is paid for. **We all want justice now, but there will be justice in the end because of Jesus.** If God lets it go then why can't he let go of Osama Ben Laden, Hitler, Stalin and Jeffrey Dahmer's sins?

**If death is the end then all of those people got away with it and I will get away with it too.**

**That being said, we need a resurrection, not some theory about "pie in the sky" or we all die, period. We need a resurrection in 2021 to remind us that...Eternity is real**

**There is more than just this whether "this" has been a disappointment to you or even if you believe it has gone pretty good for you.**

**The ascension story takes Jesus from grave, back to the right hand of the father where he came from. <sup>6</sup> So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him,**

"Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" <sup>7</sup> He replied, "**The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.**" <sup>8</sup> But you will receive **power when the Holy Spirit** comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup> After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. <sup>10</sup> As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. <sup>11</sup> "Men of Galilee," they said, "**why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!**" Acts 1:6-11

**Eternity is real because Jesus really was dead and then walked around with his friends getting them ready to take over the family business, which is making disciples and pushing the kingdom of God forward.**

**It's real because this dead man, who is now alive, ascends into heaven, promising to come back, which will completely restore his kingdom. He will then create a new heaven and earth and those who have followed him, whether they are dead or alive, will live with him forever.**

**If there is no eternity and Jesus wasn't resurrected, then his story is simply a metaphor for sacrifice.**

**Then Jesus becomes a somewhat pathetic figure who gave his life and then nothing came of it. His death was the end. That wasn't the end of the story. His death means something because there is eternity in the balance.**

**Knowing that there is something beyond this is really important in 2021. The struggles aren't simply random and meaningless. The pain isn't simply to torture us. This isn't God, if there is a god, proving that he can wipe us out or punish us just because he can.**

**And we are promised resurrection power from the Holy Spirit. The same power that brought Jesus out of the tomb is ours when we accept Jesus' mission.**

**I can face what last year brought and what 2021 will bring if I know that the power that raised Jesus from the grave is the same power that will transform my life and enable me to overcome.**

**Jesus' resurrection and then his ascension all prove that eternity is real. If we are going to experience resurrection, then we must know that... Today matters.**



**We need a resurrection because today matters. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

**The resurrection of Jesus gives us good news to spread. Today is the day we get to live with the presence of the one who defeated death, living in us. That is what the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is Jesus being present in us instead of being confined to one body. When you are carrying a cargo like that, today matters, your presence matters too because the risen Christ is living his life through you.**

**Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Stop staring into heaven and get moving, because today is important because we have been given a commission to go.**

**Don't sell out today for the future. "One of these days when I graduate, when I get my first real job, get married, have kids, the kids are out of diapers, the kids leave home, I get that management job, I retire...Stop staring off into the future, because today matters. Today is not simply about securing your future.**

**We need to stop staring into heaven for this reason... If I obey him today, then my future is secure in his hands.**

**What I sow or plant today will decide what I reap or harvest later. I can live however I want now, but that will just push the payment down the road into the future. As they say, the piper will get paid or if you want another old time phrase, "the chickens will come home to roost."**

**The rope illustration from Francis Chan...What I do in this little bit of time determines what happens in the rest of eternity.**

**Because it is all the kingdom of God...present reality, future hope all in one, the already, but not yet.**

**In 2021 it is vital to live as if today matters, not simply when things get better. This time is like being under water. Hold your breath, hang on and get to the surface where you can breath. We cannot view our lives here as simply getting off of a sinking ship. That discounts the kingdom of God as a present reality and only makes it something in the future.**

**We need a resurrection in 2021 more than ever because it's...**A promise that brings hope.****

**We can never leave or feel forsaken, even to the end of the age. Up to the point where everyone thinks it is the end and beyond.**

**This hope isn't shallow hope, like get me out of this problem. It is the ultimate hope that someone will stick with me, care for me, even through death.**

I couldn't go there with Quinten, but Jesus could.

**Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" John 11:25-26** Jesus is saying that **he is THE source of eternal life because he is the resurrection. It isn't just something that he experienced, it is who he is and why he came.** We have to go to the one who is the resurrection in order to have the hope that death isn't the end for us.

Paul says it this way...**And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. 1 Corinthians 15:19**

Here is why the resurrection brings hope...**But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. <sup>21</sup> So you see, just as**

death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. <sup>22</sup> Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. <sup>23</sup> But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. <sup>24</sup> After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. <sup>26</sup> **And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.** <sup>27</sup> For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) <sup>28</sup> Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God's authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

**Our hope is so powerful because it takes the enemies biggest weapon and renders it devoid of power. Satan has only one strategy, "steal, kill, and destroy." He can't kill and he can't destroy. That is a powerful kind of hope. It's not "I hope things get better" or "I hope I get that job" or "I hope my life is happy". This is, "I have hope that even if things don't get better and I don't get that job or meet that perfect spouse or have a**

**"happy life," whatever that means, I still know that the one thing that lurks in the shadows cannot stop me."**

That brings us to the last reason we need a resurrection in 2021. It's because...**Pain, suffering, and death do not have the last word.**

Death does not get the final word. Here is the final word. **"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matthew 25:21**

- **Master's rest or happiness...** Don't you think you could use some of that good stuff, whether it is happiness or rest?

**Do you feel like your life needs to be resurrected in 2021?** It's like you need to come out of some metaphorical, emotional, relational tomb. **Stop trying to prop up, tweak, adjust, make a comeback, or turn things around. Allow something to die so that you can experience resurrection this year.**

**Start living the resurrection.**

**1. Begin a relationship with the living Jesus.**

**Repent...believe/trust...follow is the way we step over the line of faith. It's no longer about believing in Jesus as if he's a really good idea or a historical fact. It's turning away from my old life as my own king, trusting**

**my today and tomorrow to Jesus and starting to obey what he says in his word. In other words, joining what he is doing in this world. Letting the risen Christ live his life through you and make his kingdom present through your life. Today is the perfect day to experience that resurrection. If you are feeling like this part of the message is for you, then talk to someone who has been walking with Jesus and have him or her get you started. This person can point you to the places you can grow.**

## **2. Start learning and doing what he did today.**

Four times a week in God's word is where we see a spike in life transformation.

Don't believe the conspiracy theories.

Eternity is real.

Today matters

It is a promise that brings hope.

Pain, suffering and death do not get the last word!

**God wants a resurrection for you and for his church in 2021.**