

It is my great joy and humble responsibility to lead you in worship by inviting you to open the infallible record to Matthew 27. Before we look at chapter 27:62 through 28:10, let me preface my remarks by asking you to think about the incarnation of Christ. Every aspect of the incarnation of Christ is a marvel to anyone who contemplates it. God becoming man is something that exceeds our ability to comprehend. Moreover, I'm amazed at God's divine plan for redemption, to reconcile sinners to Himself. I'm amazed at the methods that He used to do so, and that He continues to use. The methods of God's plan are counter intuitive to anything we would concoct. God's plans make no sense whatsoever from a human perspective. They are at odds with our modern church growth movement—a movement that can draw a crowd but cannot build a church. There is a huge difference between a crowd and a church. True ministry will always seem counter intuitive.

When you think of God's plan for redemption, think how silly it sounds from man's perspective. God decided to send His own Son to earth, not as a conquering King but as a baby born in obscurity. God, in essence, wanted Him to be born into the most hated group of people on the planet. He wanted Him to be part of a group that lives in religious apostasy; to live a life of obscurity with virtually no earthly possessions; to have no ministry headquarters, no limousines, no radio or television ministry. God wanted Him, for three years, to minister to people and tell them things they did not want to hear; to wander around in a sixty mile circle for His ministry, and to attack the influential religious elite and to expose their religious hypocrisy. God did not want Him to gain their support to open doors. He wanted Jesus to spend most of His time with the poor, the uneducated, the outcasts, the social misfits. God never wanted Him to be surrounded by celebrities that could help Him get into certain places and draw a bigger crowd.

Instead, God wanted Him to choose uneducated, untrained—in most cases—unwanted social misfits as His representatives. God wanted Him to preach a message that was so utterly offensive and ridiculous that even His own countrymen would cry out for His blood. Ultimately, God wanted Him to die an ignominious and excruciating death on a Roman cross, condemned for crimes He never committed. Quite a plan, right? No marketing firm would ever have conceived of such a plan. Yet Jesus was the most influential person that ever lived on this planet. God deliberately placed astounding obstacles on the Gospel road, and voluntarily limited His supernatural powers and took on the limitations of humanity. Why would He do this? The answer is very simple: so that He can get all of the glory for what would transpire, and the capstone of His glory is seen in His resurrection from the dead.

Today we will join the angel's summons to the two Marys when He bid them to come see the place where He was lying. By God's grace and by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit we will get lost in the wonder of the sacred sepulcher that could not hold the One who has power over death. No wonder the theme of Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born was one of the resurrection when he exclaimed in Acts 2:23-24 that, "God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." We do not come to examine a massive pyramid designed to immortalize a mere man whose body is still incarcerated in some dark tomb. Nor do we come to some magnificent mausoleum of a great king or queen that is long departed, but seldom remembered. Rather, we visit today a vacant vault that once existed, but frankly now we're not even sure where it is or if it still exists. One in which the body disappeared, for He has risen from the dead as He has promised.

In the reality of this scene we have a living hope, a blessed hope, a joyous hope, because we can think ahead with joyous anticipation with respect to our own resurrection. We can echo the words of Job in chapter 19:25-26, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.” What a glorious promise that is. For those of us who are united to Christ in faith and have loved ones that have gone on before who have likewise placed their faith in the Lord Jesus, this solemn scene we look at today will also be a scene of great rejoicing because Jesus said in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies.” Isn’t that a wonderful statement? And He also said in John 14:19, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

Because of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we rejoice not only in the anticipation of being reunited someday with our loved ones, but also we rejoice in the glories of our inheritance. In fact, Peter declared that we have a “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away” (I Peter 1:3b-4). The greatest joy of our inheritance is seeing the triune God face to face and living in the presence of His glory. God Himself is the supreme gift of our salvation. For this reason the Psalmist said in Psalm 27:4, “One thing I have asked from the **LORD**, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the **LORD** all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the **LORD** and to meditate in His temple.”

Dear Christian, you must understand that the ultimate exhilaration of our existence is something that we’ve never yet even come close to experiencing. That is, standing in the presence of our God. With this in mind, the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 42:1-2, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” Paul wrote in Philippians 1:23, “I desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”

There is no other source of delight for our souls than being in the presence of God. Our everlasting pleasure is in God alone. Indeed, the greatest gift of the Gospel is Christ Himself, and all that means with respect to our being in the presence of the triune God. The supreme joy of heaven will be just that. For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.” In 2 Corinthians 5:8 he said, “I prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

Now, let’s immerse our souls in the context of this amazing text before we read it. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have gone to great lengths to prepare the body of the Lord Jesus. There has been, the Bible tells us, over 100 pounds of spices applied to the body, various layers of spices on the corpse, and layers of linen wrappings. Obviously this indicates that they were not thinking of a resurrection, or they would not have gone to such great lengths. There has been a large stone rolled into the entrance of the tomb, and now we pick it up in Matthew 27:62.

“Now on the next day, which is the one after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, ‘Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, *After three days I am to rise again.*’” It’s now the Passover Sabbath and the religious elite—still seething with hatred towards Jesus, who had so thoroughly exposed and humiliated them—remember Jesus’ earlier prediction, which is recorded in Matthew 12:38. Jesus says there, “An evil and adulterous

generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Of course on some level these religious charlatans did not believe what Jesus said, but yet, down deep, they were afraid that it just might be true. Certainly, the divine consequences for them would be staggering if it were true, but they were more afraid of the disciples than they were of God. Frankly, they were afraid that the disciples might steal the body and cause all of the people to believe that maybe Jesus was who He said He was, and that He had risen from the dead. In verse 64 we read, “Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”

The only thing more dangerous to a totalitarian regime—or even some religious regime—than an opposing king, is an opposing King who claimed to be the Son of God, who was wrongfully condemned, crucified and risen from the dead. That would be their worst nightmare. Even a hint of resurrection could set off a brush fire of insurrection.

In verses 65-66 we read, “Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.’ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.” In other words, they are sending a strong message here saying, ‘This grave, this stone is protected by Rome: Stay away!’

I have to pause here for a moment. It’s a marvelous wonder to me whenever I think of the providence of God: He superintends the minds and the wills of these vicious pagans as well as apostates, to go to enormous lengths, not only to prevent anyone from stealing the body, but to document it as well. Why? So that no honest person could possibly review what was about to transpire and deduce from what happened that anything happened other than a resurrection, the resurrection of Christ. However, it’s significant to note that later on the chief priests tried to bribe some of the soldiers to say that the disciples stole the body while they were asleep. I’m amazed to see how often God’s saving purposes are concealed in calamity and circumstances with impossible odds, thus ruling out any possible alternative explanation other than God alone accomplished through His sovereign and omnipotent power precisely what He wanted to accomplish.

This brings us to the heart of the text, the first 10 verses of chapter 28 where Matthew reveals to us the glory of the resurrection, and he does so by manifesting it through the character and conduct of two women. This is a deeply personal account that takes us into the lives of two very devoted and godly women. This portrays the proper response of everyone who has committed their lives to Christ. By God’s grace we will grasp the glory of the resurrection by looking at four things. First we will see *the arrival of the loyal women and the royal messenger*; secondly we will hear *a message of comfort and command*; thirdly we will witness *hearts of obedience*, hearts that are balanced by godly fear and joy; and fourthly we will *behold the living Savior*.

First let’s look at the *arrival of the loyal women and the royal messenger* in chapter 28:1, “Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.” As a footnote, Mark and Luke indicate that two other women were there as

The Glory of the Resurrection Matthew 27:62-28:10

well, Salome, who was Zebedee's wife and the mother of James and John, as well as Joanna. But Matthew focuses his attention exclusively on the two Marys. Mark's Gospel indicates that they came while it was dark, the sun had not yet risen. They had brought spices to anoint the Lord. They were in hopes that somehow they could get into the tomb. In Mark 16:3 they said to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

As we think about this, their early arrival proved their tireless love and devotion to the Lord Jesus, but it also helps us see that they were certainly not expecting a resurrection. Like many Christians today, they along with the disciples had not listened carefully to what the Lord told them, what He had taught. They believed what they *wanted* to believe, and how often is that the case with us? We hear one thing but we want to believe something else, so we have selective hearing. They thought that the Lord would come now as the Messiah. That He was going to destroy Rome and establish the glorious kingdom and they were going to live in the kingdom age. They could not fathom Him being crucified, much less being resurrected from the grave. Of course later on they perceived these truths and lived consistently with them.

I want to digress for a moment. Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of ostensibly Christian people who do not believe in the literal resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Might I say, those people are not truly born again. Anyone who denies the resurrection of Christ cannot truly be born again. That is essential to the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." He went on to say in verses 17-19, "...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."

The latest poll by the Scripps Survey Research Center at Ohio University asked 1,007 adult residents of the United States the following question: "Do you believe that, after you die, your physical body will be resurrected someday?" It's interesting that 36% said yes. I found it fascinating that 59% of those who claim to be born again said yes. What that means is that 41% said no. Can you imagine claiming that you are born again but you do not believe in the resurrection?

Back to the text. As the two Marys approach the tomb, verses 2 and 3 say, "And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow." Here we see the arrival of the royal messenger, the angel of the Lord. What a grand and glorious entry it is. Reflecting the brilliant light of divine glory, having been in the presence of the resplendent, ineffable, dazzling light of the Shekinah glory of God, he now descends to earth, this glorious angel. There is also an earthquake that rolls the stone away. By the way, the stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let us in. As later appearances of Jesus indicated, His resurrection body was not bound to the limitations of the physical order of the universe, nor will ours someday.

But here my friends we have a foretaste of the future coming of the Lord Himself, where, as Matthew said in 24:30, "the Son of Man (will come) on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." Unlike His first arrival when He came in obscurity, and in humility, His second coming will be marked first of all by utter darkness, when all of the luminaries will cease to give off light, and suddenly the resplendent glory of the sign of the Son of Man, His Shekinah, will light up the world. By the way,

there will also be another earthquake, according to Zechariah 14. The Mount of Olives will cleave in two and here, in this little narrative of historical truth, we see a preview of coming attractions.

In John 20:1-2, Mary Magdalene sees the empty tomb. When she sees it she immediately takes off. It says she “ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’” Obviously she didn’t stay to hear the angelic explanation, nor did it occur to her that He had risen from the dead, just like He said He would. Then John’s Gospel tells us that Peter and John run to the tomb and in verse 4 we see the reaction to the supernatural and terrifying event of the angel and the earthquake. It says, “and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.”

There were probably a good number of troops there. We don’t know exactly how many. It had to have been a relatively strong but small detachment, probably twenty to fifty men. We don’t know how many but we do know that they are going to faint with fear. Verse 11 tells us that later on some of them came into the city, which indicates that some of them didn’t. Certainly they feared for their lives because of what had happened. But the Greek term here for “shook” is related to the same term we would use for earthquake. It denotes an internal shaking or quaking. When they saw the angel, and the earth shook, and the stone rolled away, it rattled them to the core, causing them to faint with fear. That’s the idea. If a mere angel could cause hardened soldiers to collapse in fear, even at the risk of losing their own lives for failing to do their duty, imagine what it will be like someday when unbelievers see Jesus Christ in all of His glory.

This leads us to the second glorious aspect of the resurrection scene. Secondly we hear *the message of comfort and command* in verse 5. “And the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.’” Here we see divine mercy in action. There is no reprimand for their lack of faith, for not believing in Jesus’ promise that He was going to rise from the dead. Instead God rewards their loving devotion and instructs His angel to console these precious ones, like a tender father would care for a frightened child in distress. The angel immediately summarizes the situation in an economy of words in verse 6 saying, “He is not here, for he has risen, just as he said.” Then he summons the terrified ladies with this command, “Come, see the place where he was lying.” As if to gently guide these loyal women as they faced their fear and their confusion, the angel leads them into the tomb. Naturally, these dear ladies were traumatized. We all would have been traumatized. They were speechless and emotionally disoriented. It’s one thing to see an empty tomb, but can you imagine standing in the presence of a glorious angel with the light shining all around?

People in such a condition need clear and concise objective truth to anchor them to reality. God provides precisely that with the angelic messenger. In Mark 16:6 we read that he said, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.” So there they see with their own eyes the linen wrappings collapsed upon themselves. By now Peter and John arrive, and John tells us in 20:6-7 that they “beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.”

What an indescribable scene. Imagine the emotions they must have felt. Joy mixed with fear. Hope mixed with doubt. Astonishment mixed with despair. Their emotional systems had to have been on

overload, adrenalin racing through their veins. It would all be so hard to take in. Perhaps now their minds are trying to replay what it was that Jesus said. If only they could remember exactly what He said. He did say something about rising from the dead.

Beloved, we must learn to listen very carefully to what the Lord says. We must meditate on His Word, and let it soak into our mind so that it dominates our thoughts and it informs our conscience and rules our will. We're all going to have great times of trial in our life. Whenever we're in the crucible of grace this will be a time of confusion, where we will be overwhelmed. Dear friends, you will sink into a slough of despair unless you have the rock of objective truth to stand upon. It's not the right time to learn theology when you're in the midst of some great trial. Learn it before you get there, then you will have something to stand upon. I think of the Psalmist in Psalm 1 that speaks of "the blessed man...the one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on that law both day and night. And that man will be like a tree that is firmly planted."

The angels speak again to the women, Luke tells us in chapter 24:5-7. "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Dear friends I have to say to you, come, see where they have laid them. See it in your mind's eye. He is not there. He has risen as He said. Dear Christian, when life's trials seem more than you can bear, you need to go frequently to the empty tomb. You need to come and visit it and be comforted by it. For indeed that tomb was so full of glory and promise and hope that it could not contain the Lord. Though our sin put Him there, His divine righteousness freed Him from it. Indeed His resurrection guarantees ours, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, "Now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." What a wonderful truth. This has been the blessed hope of the redeemed down through redemptive history.

After offering that much needed comfort, God speaks through His messenger and gives them a command in verse 7. He says, "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." This is in keeping with Jesus' earlier promise to His disciples in chapter 26:32 where He said, "After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." They didn't really want to hear that, because their mind was set on what they wanted to hear. But maybe now they were beginning to remember some of this.

Why Galilee? This was the place of their origin, their home region. This was the place where Jesus had spent most of His time in ministry. This was where most of His miracles had been performed. Galilee was a place with both Jew and Gentile. It was far removed from the apostate religious leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem. This would be the place where He would commission them, and all of us, to "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I command you," as we will study later in verses 19-20. What an indescribable reunion that must have been, later on in Galilee, to see the Lord Jesus Christ alive and well. They are able to hear His voice once again, to touch Him and look into His face. I have to laugh: you can be sure that they listened much more attentively the next time they saw Him.

Scripture describes numerous and many unspecified post-resurrection appearances over the next 40 days, where the Lord appeared to individuals and groups, and in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us that “He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time.” This would have been in Galilee. I might also add that the testimony of so many eyewitnesses gives further credence to the veracity of the resurrection story.

So the angel tells the women to “go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him.” John 20 tells us that Peter and John “went away again to their own homes.” In Mark 24:12 it says that Peter was “marveling at what happened.” It also tells us that the other women also departed. No doubt they were dazed by all that had transpired. Only one woman remained there at the tomb, and that was Mary Magdalene. John 20:11-16 tells us what happened.

“But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means teacher).”

What a breathtaking scene! Somehow, as I meditate on that scene, in the recesses of my imagination I can smell the fresh morning air, mixed with the aroma of the myrrh and the spices. There’s no hint of decay here. I can see the brightness and the purity and glory of the Lord and the angels and the light that lit up that chamber—a chamber that now is not a place of unspeakable horror but of unspeakable rest and promise. As I meditate on that passage I can hear the voice of the angels gently encouraging this awestruck woman, still trembling, with both fear and joy, and weeping. I think of John 20:12 where it says, “she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.”

I think about that slab of rock where the Savior lay. As I reflect upon that and see in my mind’s eye the angels there, one at the head and one at the feet, I’m reminded of the mercy seat that existed above the Ark of the Covenant that contained the violated law beneath. And of the angels and cherubs with outstretched, golden wings that hovered over the mercy seat, and the presence of God’s glory that hovered above that seat. Now, they sit on each end of a sacred altar in the sepulcher, where only the remnant of the sacrifice remains: grave clothes without a body, proving again that the final sacrifice had been made and approved by God. Can’t you hear those two heavenly beings talking? I don’t know, perhaps they’re engaged in a language that we couldn’t even understand, speaking of the marvels of redemption, of the glory of the only begotten of the Father.

Spurgeon perfectly captures that moment in his pensive reflection where he said, “Ye know that angels did go into his tomb, for they sat one at his head and the other at his foot in holy meditation. I picture to myself those bright cherubs sitting there talking to one another. One of them said, ‘It was there his feet lay;’ and the other replied, ‘and there his hands, and there his head;’ and in celestial language did

they talk concerning the deep things of God; then they stooped and kissed the rocky floor, made sacred to the angels themselves, not because there they were redeemed, but because there their Master and their monarch, whose high behests they were obeying, did for awhile become the slave of death, and the captive of destruction.” What an amazing scene.

Now thirdly, as we examine this text, we witness in these women *hearts of obedience, hearts that were balanced with a godly fear and joy*. Great illumination always calls for faithful obedience. In verse 8 we see this. “And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.” Luke tells us that when the disciples heard this they thought it was nonsense. They didn’t believe it. Again, I must add, this is yet another piece of evidence refuting the notion that the disciples had stolen the body or were even thinking about it.

The ladies do exactly what they’re told to do, their hearts filled with fear and great joy. I want to stay here for a moment. Godly fear will always be the reaction of those who have legitimately heard from God, from those who have legitimately been in His presence through the power of His Holy Spirit. The Word of God tells us that the fear of God in Scripture is described as the beginning of knowledge. The fear of God is the hatred of evil. It is the beginning of wisdom, and it is wisdom. It is a treasure to saints, a fountain to life. The Scriptures tell us that the fear of God is cultivated by contemplating the holiness of God, the greatness of God, the goodness of God, the forgiveness of God, the wondrous works of God and the judgments of God. If you want to fear God, contemplate on His holiness, His greatness, His goodness, His forgiveness, His wondrous works and His judgments. And you will fear God.

The Bible tells us that those who fear God give pleasure to God, they are pitied by God, they are accepted by God, they receive mercy from God, they are blessed by God, they confide in God, they will depart from evil, they will converse together with other saints about holy things, they will not have a fear of man and that God will fulfill the desires of their heart. All of this is characterized in the faithful obedience of these dear women. As a result of their godly fear, they were filled with joy. The source of true joy can only flow from the wellspring of godly fear. All else is a fleeting pleasure. For this reason their hearts can be summarized well by the Psalmist’s words in 2:11 where we read, “Serve the **LORD** with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” There is the balance.

Fourthly and finally, we behold *the living Savior*. In verse 9, “And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.” Oh what joy to see the risen Savior, face to face! Can you imagine what they must have experienced? It reminds me of that song that the ensemble sings from time to time. One of the choruses says:

“When I see Him; see His glory.
When I stand in awe before His majesty.
Bow before Him, and adore Him,
In His presence forever I will be.”

It’s little wonder that they took hold of His feet and they worshiped Him. Such will always be the response of those who have truly been redeemed, who truly love and worship the Lord and long to be in His presence forever.

Then in verse 10 Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.” Oh, child of God, don’t miss the profundity of this little text, for tucked inside of this text is the most precious word: “brethren.” Notice He did not say, ‘Go tell those cowards, those unfaithful scoundrels,’ or ‘Go tell those quarrelsome disciples of mine, those proud and ignorant characters.’ No, He said to go tell “My brethren.” He had previously called them slaves and friends, but now for the first time the Lord calls them His brethren. You must understand that because now, after the cross, they had, and we have, a new relationship with Him. We are now His brethren.

Paul summarizes this so well in Romans 8:14-17 as the Spirit of God speaks through his pen. It says (we are now) “sons of God” and in verse 15, “you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” Now the Lord can say, ‘Go tell My brethren, I’m coming. I’ll meet you in Galilee.’ What a marvelous thought. It’s also for this reason that we can call one another brothers and sisters in Christ. We’re all related to each other through Christ, those of us who love Him. What a marvelous reality, all made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. Oh the glories of the resurrection, so clearly manifested in the character and the conduct of two women.

I want to close with this thought. We must all die. Seldom do we think of that moment, but it will come. For some it will come suddenly. For others it will be a time of lingering and perhaps languishing on some bed of affliction. But whenever we pause to consider the day when suddenly the spirit leaves the clay, I pray that you will remember the empty tomb on that day. I pray that you will visit it on that day, and take in all that it represents on your behalf. Because such a chamber as the Lord once laid in will be yours and mine someday, when this frail tabernacle of flesh and bone ceases to function. I pray that when you look back across your journey on that day, that your heart will not be pierced by the pangs of regret and remorse, but rather that your fear will be tempered with joy. How sad, and I have seen this more times than I wish to recount, those who claim the name of Christ who lie upon that bed, and they are plagued by the tyranny of the “If onlys.” If only I had made the Lord the priority of my life. If only I had humbled myself more before His Word and lived consistently with it. If only I had honored Him with my time and resources, rather than spending it all upon myself. If only I had worked less and worshiped more. If only I had loved my wife as Christ loved the Church. If only I had loved my husband as God would have me. If only I had instructed my children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. If only. If only.

And how much *more bitter* it is for those who lie on that bed without Christ. I’ve witnessed to them as they growl at me. I’ve seen them writhe in uncomfortable pain, not just because of their physical condition, because today we have so many medications that can alleviate that, but they writhe in spiritual anguish because they have no hope. I believe that literally the flames of hell begin to engulf them. Oh what a bitter farewell that day will be for those who wasted their entire life on themselves, and never lived for the glory of God.

May the glories of the resurrection stir each of our hearts. May it stir our hearts as we learn from the loyal women, and from the royal messengers—heed what they have to say to come and look into the empty tomb. May we hear the message of comfort and command, and may we imitate the hearts of obedience of the loyal women, balanced by a godly fear that produced the great joy of walking with

The Glory of the Resurrection Matthew 27:62-28:10

Christ. And may we anticipate that day when we too will behold the living Savior face to face. Not in a tomb, but outside the tomb. To God be the glory.

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