

Lasting Impressions from the Last Week of Jesus' Life
The Last Victory: The Resurrection
Matthew 28

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Text Introduction: For the last several weeks, we have examined the last week of Jesus' earthly life. In our text today, we read of the resurrection. Perhaps the best part of this last week of Jesus' life is that we come to the end and realize that it is not the end at all. Though you know the story well, I invite you to think deeply again about the resurrection of our Lord.

Text: After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. ² Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached [the tomb]. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his robe was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so shaken from fear of him that they became like dead men.

⁵ But the angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell His disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead. In fact, He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there.' Listen, I have told you."

⁸ So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell His disciples the news. ⁹ Just then Jesus met them and said, "Good morning!" They came up, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see Me there."

¹¹ As they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³ and told them, "Say this, 'His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.' ¹⁴ If this reaches the governor's ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

¹⁶ The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Introduction: The road to Jerusalem and the cross has been Jesus' journey. He stopped to heal a blind man on the way. He stopped to cleanse the temple. Then, He made His way to the Mount of Olives for His final sermon. The upper room and the Garden of Gethsemane were quiet places of strength and prayer before the tumultuous end. His next stop was before Pilate for the final sentence. From all outward appearances the cross and the tomb seem to be dead ends. But. . . when we turn the page of

the story, we realize that the cross and the tomb are not dead end at all, but rather the gateway to new roads of discovery. What are the roads that come to life as a result of the empty tomb?

The Road of Believed Promises! (28:1-7)

*“He is not here, for He has risen, **just as He said.**” (28:6)*

Did you catch that—“Just as He said!” Jesus had promised that He was going to be raised from the grave. This fulfilled promise becomes our guarantee for all the other promises of God.

The Proof of the Resurrection

1. Empty Tomb—That was the proof to those on that morning.
2. Eyewitnesses—First Corinthians 15 mentions these as witnesses: “...that He appeared to Cephas (that’s Peter), then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time...Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all...He also appeared to me (Paul).” 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.
3. Emergence of the Church—The fact that the church emerged in power from this small band of followers is incredible proof of the fact of the resurrection. They believed so much that many died for their belief in the resurrection.

Our Promise as a Result of the Resurrection

So, the resurrection is a road to believed promises. Seeing that the resurrection (just as He said) is real, we can count on all of the other promises. Let’s talk about one. We need the promise of eternal life. We need the promise of eternal life because each of us has a problem—sin. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The further problem with sin is that sin leads to death—eternal death. But the promise is that the free gift of God is eternal life.

The Road of Worship (28:8-17)

*“And they left the tomb quickly with **fear and great joy** . . . and they came up and took hold of His feet and **worshiped Him.**” (28:8-9)*

The resurrection if true must leave a lasting impression upon us. What do we do with such knowledge? C.S. Lewis said of Christianity: “If false, Christianity is of no importance; if true, it is of infinite importance. The only thing that Christianity cannot be is moderately important.”

The resurrection demands a response of belief and beyond belief continued worship. We see that in our text today.

Balance in our Worship (28:8-9)

1. Reverence--fear
2. Exuberance—great joy

Barrier to our Worship (28:17)

Doubt

A 2009 Harris Interactive Poll indicated that 70% of Americans polled believe in the resurrection of Jesus. There is something that I don't understand about this poll. If that is true, and by the way I have no reason to doubt that it is, most of that 70% is missing the enormity of the implication that Jesus is alive. The resurrection of Jesus opens up the road of worship. The resurrection demands worship.

The Road of Witness (28:18-20)

Finally, we must make sure that we allow the resurrection to open up for us the road of witness. My favorite Easter story comes from the life of British minister, W. E. Sangster. The following is from *Leadership Journal* edited by Craig Brian Larson.

“Margaret Sangster Phippen wrote that in the mid-1950s her father, British minister W. E. Sangster, began to notice some uneasiness in his throat and a dragging in his leg. When he went to the doctor, he found that he had an incurable disease that caused progressive muscular atrophy. His muscles would gradually waste away, his voice would fail, his throat would soon become unable to swallow.

Sangster threw himself into his work in British home missions, figuring he could still write, and he would have even more time for prayer. ‘Let me stay in the struggle, Lord,’ he pleaded. ‘I don't mind if I can no longer be a general, but give me just a regiment to lead.’ He wrote articles and books, and helped organize prayer cells throughout England. ‘I'm only in the kindergarten of suffering,’ he told people who pitied him.

Gradually Sangster's legs became useless. His voice went completely. But he could still hold a pen, shakily. On Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote a letter to his daughter. In it, he said, ‘It is terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice to shout, ‘He is risen!’ – but it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout.’”