

## **HE IS ALIVE!**

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text            Matthew 28:1-9

Purpose:        To help us realize that Jesus is no longer dead, but He is alive! This means that He has conquered our last enemy, death. What He promised concerning His death, burial, and resurrection is completed. He promised us a place with Him if we believe. Even if we die, we will be raised with Him one day. His resurrection has provided us living grace, living victory, and a living hope as we live out our days.

### **Introduction**

This past week, Kay Blizzard brought in these beautiful Easter Lilies we see this morning. These lilies have been filling this sanctuary with their aroma. Maybe you can smell the sweet fragrance they put off. I am still struggling with regaining my sense of smell. I have come to believe the space in which Jesus was buried was filled with an aroma of perfume and spices.



Jesus was already anointed with oil by Mary Magdalene a few days before. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus quickly wrapped His body in a cloth and placed Him in a cold, dark tomb. Even though He was beaten brutally and

crucified, I am sure one could still catch a whiff of the perfume that He was anointed with.

On that Sabbath day, so long ago, Jesus was dead, laying in a tomb intended for Joseph of Arimathea. The Pharisees and Sadducees heard exactly what Jesus had said about being resurrected after three days.

They made arrangements to have guards placed at the entrance of the grave and sealed it with a large stone.



Jesus was placed in the tomb on Friday, remained in the tomb on Saturday, the last day of the week. That Saturday was a Sabbath day which was the first day of the festival of unleavened bread. Corruption and decay had not begun to touch His body.

### **On the First Day of the Week**

But according to scripture, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to bring spices to anoint Jesus' body. They may have heard Jesus' teachings, but it had not penetrated their hearts enough for them to believe that He would be alive. As they approached the tomb, they were shocked and astonished to find the stone sealing the tomb had been rolled away and an angel was sitting in the place where they laid Jesus.



The angel told them that Jesus was no longer dead. He was ALIVE! Of all the gospel stories about the resurrection, the one in Mark has

the fewest details. Those that saw Jesus crucified had the hardest time accepting the word of eye witnesses to His resurrection. But when you read the other accounts in Matthew, Luke and John, you find that Jesus talked to over five hundred people over the next forty days.

Sometimes we are so hard on Thomas for doubting, but aren't we the same way? We don't believe unless we see it for ourselves. People today even question the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. The Muslim faith rejects the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. If Satan can convince you that Jesus is not alive, then He has accomplished what He intended – to stop us from believing in the One and Only Son of God.

### **Answering the Question, “So what?” – as it relates to those who have died**

It is true that death came to Christ on Friday. He didn't swoon, faint, or pass out. He was dead. Those that saw His crucifixion, knew he was dead. But now we can say, “Jesus is Alive!”



One of my professors at Campbell always challenged us with a question, “So what?” If this information about Jesus' resurrection is true, then “So what?” What does this event almost 2000 years ago have to do with me?

I have learned all too well that death is a common event in the life of everyone. I never thought that there would come a day when so many people I have loved are no longer with us. I am sure if you are sitting here today, you are thinking

about someone that you loved and they are no longer with us as well.

When we bury someone that we love, we bury them with the hope that we will see them again. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians 4:13-18 helps us answer the "So what?" question concerning the resurrection of the dead.

*"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*



*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead **in Christ** will rise first.*

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

*Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

We can now live life to its fullest knowing that even though we have lost someone we love dearly to death; we have not lost them eternally. If they are believers in Jesus Christ, they too will be resurrected in the same manner as Jesus was. Our Hope is in Christ. Our hope is in the resurrection!

The Hope of the Resurrection is the answer to the "So what?" question.

## **Answering the Question, "So what?" – as it relates to those who are still alive**

We understand the answer to "So what?" for those that have gone on to be with the Lord, but what about us that are still here? How does the resurrection of Jesus help me cope with living my life now? You may think that death is so far away and I really don't want to dwell on that now. How does the truth of the resurrection help me cope with work, school, family, relationships, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren?

There are at least three words that come to my mind as we consider the resurrection of Jesus. These words can help us live in the here and now.

### **I. Jesus' Resurrection Provides Grace<sup>1</sup>**

The first word that comes to my mind when I consider the resurrection is "grace." The church throughout the ages has sung about the grace of God. Songs like Amazing Grace, and Grace Greater than our Sin reminds us of what God has done and how we didn't deserve to receive it.



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<sup>1</sup> "If the Tomb Could Talk!" adapted from sermon by Terrell Bradley, Highlawn Baptist Church Huntington, W. VA.

Grace has been defined as “unmerited favor.” We have found favor with God through His Son for the forgiveness of our sins. This grace from God is a gift. It is not something that is deserved or merited. Because of this free gift, we are to express gratitude. We give thanks and praise to God because He has forgiven us. You do not express gratitude to win God’s favor. Christians express gratitude by praising and thanking God for His love and blessings.

The forgiveness we so desperately need cannot be earned; it can only be given. Nothing we receive from God depends upon anything we’ve done. The great evangelist D. L. Moody once said, “If men worked their way to heaven, they would turn it into hell by bragging about how they did it!” If you deserved God’s forgiveness, it wouldn’t be grace. NO amount of effort can “earn” forgiveness. Forgiveness must come freely and openly from the one who has been offended. It must flow freely from a gracious heart.

It is beyond our abilities to understand why God would love lowly, unworthy sinners. Yet, the resounding truth of Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us of God’s amazing love; “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*” Because salvation results from God’s grace, it is His perfect, complete gift.



I find it interesting the value people place on material things. Have you ever noticed how people will wait in long lines, often standing for hours, and will spend a considerable amount of money, to purchase a



ticket that will allow them to enter an event that will last only a few hours? After the event, the ticket is worthless, so they toss it on the ground and go on with life.

Many people treat God’s plan of salvation in the same manner. Sadly, our culture is indifferent to the reality of the resurrection and God’s sufficient grace because they prefer a token faith. They don’t want to deal with the resurrection as a historical reality; rather, they want only a superficial faith. We must come face to face with the truth that Jesus arose from the grave. The amazing thing about God is that He gives us the opportunity to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior or we can choose not to believe. It is a personal decision, and there is no place for half-hearted commitment. Every person must decide.

## II. Jesus’ Resurrection Provides Victory

A second word that comes to my mind as I consider the resurrection is the word “Victory.” One of the



favorite hymns of the church is “*Victory in Jesus.*” Jesus Christ was “*delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised for our justification.*” (Romans 4:25) In this second word, we are reminded of God’s redemptive plan and it is complete **in Christ**. We no longer have to worry about the future. Our victory over death is complete. Our victory in living a victorious Christian life is also complete.

**If** Jesus was not bodily resurrected, **then** He was not God, He was not a Savior, and Christianity is a lie. Regarding the significance of the resurrection, Pastor Warren Wiersby writes, “A dead Savior cannot save anybody. The

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is as much a part of the gospel message as His sacrificial death on the cross ... The resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, the very Son of God.”

The resurrection is also evidence of the final victory for the believer. Those who are **in Christ** have victory over the final enemy, death. The empty tomb declares the resurrection hope we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus’ victory over the grave empowers the believer to face the uncertainties of life with steadfast confidence. Paul pronounced the believer’s hope when he said, *“For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”* (Romans 14:8-9)

Often the greatest threat we face in life is the threat of the unknown. Fear can paralyze and control our lives much more than we realize. This fear can dictate what we eat, what activities we engage in, where we live, and how we relate to others. COVID has done a wonderful job in instilling fear in us over the past year.



**Christ has defeated our last enemy, death.** We can begin to live our lives in light of the resurrection. Our victory over our final enemy is assured because of the empty grave.

God promises to provide the strength and resources necessary for victorious living. We can face the present with new confidence. We have the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the words to say when we are in difficult

situations, to empower us when our knees buckle. We do not face our present difficulties alone if we trust the One who has risen from the grave.

### III. Jesus’ Resurrection Provides Hope for Today

A third word that comes to my mind as I consider Jesus’ resurrection is “Hope.” Of all the emotions that sustain life hope is supreme. If we have hope, we can endure most anything in our life. Even a little glimmer of hope can inspire us to do better, to work harder, endure hardship, tolerate abuse, put up with illness – as long as there is hope. Hymns like *Blessed Assurance*, *Christ is Risen*, and *The Church’s One Foundation* remind us of our hope in Christ.

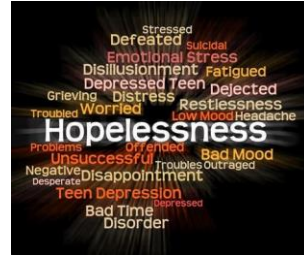


If you have ever heard bad news from the doctor, you are listening for those special words. “There is hope. I know of a treatment that can help you with this illness. I am treating someone that has this identical illness and they are alive and well.”

Yes, Jesus Christ is our hope for tomorrow, but He is also our hope for today. To live **in Christ** is a life filled to the brim with hope. Christ has said that he will never leave us or forsake us. The song, *I Come to the Garden*, expresses this truth better than I can say it. “And He walks with me and talks with me. And He tells me I am his own. And the joy that we share, as we tarry there, none other has ever known.”

Some people’s lives are filled with hopelessness. More and more people today are becoming despondent and see no end

in sight to what they are struggling with. Some teenagers think there is no hope and they commit suicide. Some adults have tried to make it through life and feel cheated and have lost hope. Some people have reached the breaking point in relationships or vocation stress, and they have lost hope.



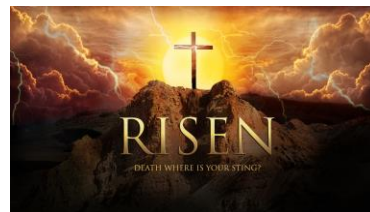
I am here to tell you that Jesus is the answer to your hopelessness. The world has sold people hope in things, possessions, status, drugs and alcohol. And yes, even a vaccine. Yet the only hope our world really has can be found in that empty tomb. Jesus is no longer there. **He is alive!** Our hope is found in a risen Savior.

### **Tell Others of His Resurrection**

This kind of good news needs to be shared.

- We find in the resurrection **eternal hope** for the ones we have lost due to death.
- We find in the resurrection **grace** sufficient to save us from our sins.
- We find in the resurrection **victory** over our last enemy, death.
- We find **hope** to make it through the day because we are not alone – Jesus has not abandoned us, He sent us the comforter - the Holy Spirit.

If you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then today can be the day to affirm your faith in the One that has eternally defeated death.



*“For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

Jesus died on a cross, His body was broken and His blood shed for your sins. They placed His lifeless body in a tomb, but on the third day, that tomb could not contain Him. Right now, the resurrected Christ waits to forgive you of your sins. He waits to give you a new life. His grace is ready to be poured out. The victory of the resurrected Christ can be yours if you are willing to confess your sins and call on the name of Jesus. And the Hope for living is available if you will call upon Him. I pray that you will listen and heed the call of God in your life today.

**He is Alive!**

Christ is Risen!

(Congregation echo: “Christ is Risen indeed!”)

**LET US PRAY**