

Sermons on Matthew

Go Tell My Brethren

Matthew 28:9, 10

With Study Questions

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And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ⁻¹⁰⁻ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me" (Matthew 28:9, 10).

Introduction

Inaugurations, coronations, military victories, military defeats and other earth-changing events are, for the most part, emblazoned across the airwaves, headlines and, in ancient times, heralds (royal officers or messenger bringing the king's message to the people—why many newspapers are called 'heralds').

Many of these events are so epic that the announcement of the event stays with the hearer for the remainder of their lives. People who lived through World War II will never forget 'Pearl Harbor Day.' Today, for example, is the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Raid by Japan. I wasn't even born but what moderately educated person is not at least somewhat familiar with President Roosevelt's description of a day that will live in infamy?

They remember VJ-Day, signaling the end of the war with Japan in Aug/Sep of 1945; and D-Day, June 6th 1944, describing the Allied invasion of Normandy. Again, I wasn't even born but I recall pictures across the front page of newspapers utilized to express the joy of the war being over, such as the one of a sailor kissing a girl in Times Square.

Other events I do remember and will never forget: When President John Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 it was on television for days. People remember where they were when they heard the news. I remember when men landed on the moon in 1969. I remember where I was when I heard that Elvis Presley died in 1977.

Significant events have always received a great deal of press. The presidential inauguration this coming January will be viewed by billions. Why am I laboring this? The reason I dwell here is due to the relative insignificance of any historical event when compared to the resurrection of

Jesus. It is **the** turning point in history. The Apostle Paul called it the **“fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4)**. The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is the point in time which separates the ages. The pathetic attempt to shift from BC (before Christ) to BCE (Before Common Era) as well as AD (*Anno Domini*—year of the/our Lord) to CE (Common Era) will never extricate from the mind of men why we have the date we have.

It is not that I think the way we describe our current place in history is all that theologically significant. It is significant though, to consider the impact of Jesus upon the hearts of men and subsequently upon the families, cultures and nations which those men form.

How does this all connect to these two verses?

God, in His divine providence, ordered the resurrection of His Son at a time when the herald would be a woman; and not just any woman, a woman who had been filled with demons (Luke 8:2), a woman who would have been despised and disrespected. Mary Magdalene, who Matthew seems to highlight, becomes the press. It is up to her to make the initial announcement of the greatest event in history. Why? The Apostle Paul has some very counter-intuitive things to say in the first chapter of his letter to the Corinthian church:

-For __you see your calling, brethren, __that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many __noble, are called. ⁻²⁷⁻ But __God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ⁻²⁸⁻ and the __base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ⁻²⁹⁻ that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

There may not be a more apt application of this passage in all of Scripture than the two verses we've approached this morning. The power of the success of the gospel is not dependent upon the innovations, power or wisdom of man. The temple (Matthew 24:1, 2) and the Roman Empire were brought to nothing. But the message Mary Magdalene—this despised woman—was to bring is, and will ever be. The success of the gospel is

dependent upon the centrality of the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In the early seventies a famous play came to Broadway called 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. The songs were very catchy. In the title song, the lyricist (a song sung by Judas) asks a question which, at first glance, makes great sense.

Now why'd you choose such a backward time
And such a strange land?
If you'd come today
You could have reached the whole nation
Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication

Could not Jesus have been marketed more efficiently? I believe in truth, reason and a good argument. I believe the Christian faith, revealed in Scripture, gives us the only plausible explanation for the reality we observe. But in the same way certain Christian groups rely too much on emotionalism, it is possible to rely too much on being innovative and clever.

At its base, the Christian faith is a simple message—our Savior is risen (Matthew 28:7) and those who trust in Christ will rise as He has risen (2 Corinthians 4:14). This is not to say there aren't deep things in Scripture that are to be studied and wrestled with. But there is a wonderful paragraph in the first chapter of Westminster Confession with which I heartily agree:

The meanings of all the passages in the Bible are not equally obvious, nor is any individual passage equally clear to everyone. However, everything which we have to know, believe, and observe in order to be saved is so clearly presented and revealed somewhere in the bible that the uneducated as well as the educated can sufficiently understand it by the proper use of the ordinary means of grace.¹

With this lengthy preamble, let us take a look at the encounter these women have with Jesus while seeking to obey the angel's admonition to tell the disciples that Jesus is risen from the dead.

¹ Taken from the Modern English Study Version of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, section 7, for example, see http://www.opc.org/documents/MESV_frames.html.

And *as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.*⁻¹⁰⁻ Then Jesus said to them, *"Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me"* (Matthew 28:9, 10).

In the Way of Duty

It is worth noting that the encouragement these women are about to receive from Jesus comes while they are on the way of duty. Certainly there are times when God providentially changes our directions as with Jonah. But those types of events, though gracious and redemptive, are generally more austere and less enjoyable. Those who are inert in their Christianity can expect little in the way of encouragement from Christ.

Christians are to obediently pursue Christ. We do this through our active participation in the sacraments, worship, hearing of God's word preached, prayer and obedience to God's command to love our neighbor in the appropriate ways of Scripture—the present case being the conveying of the message of the risen Savior. Upon meeting Jesus, these women are given three imperatives. The first is to rejoice.

Rejoice

It's been said that joy is serious business to God. We are commanded to rejoice. Now nothing can make a grumpy person more irritable than the shallow request that they smile. Yet when Jesus bids us to rejoice, be glad, be delighted, these are not empty slogans.

Christians have good reason to be joyful. The Christian's life, both here and in eternity is under the watchful, loving eye of their heavenly Father who **"works all things according to the counsel of His will"** (Ephesians 1:11).

Parents may at times lament the miserable disposition of a child who doesn't appreciate the amount of love and provision by which they are surrounded. Such despondency is sinful and parents seek to find ways to help their child value their efforts and God's good hand in their lives. Yet it is no different for adults who may find themselves in more severe circumstance. The encouragement from Paul is universal to believers.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?⁻³²⁻ **He who did not spare His own Son,**

but __delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:31, 32)

Frankly, being joyful or rejoicing is not always an easy command to obey. There may be numerous enemies keeping us from joy. And it doesn't help, as some have tried, to turn joyfulness into something less than what it is rather than a fully immerse gladness which envelopes our entire being.

Sometimes our lack of ability to rejoice may ironically push us further down the alley of misery. We become depressed because of our inability to rejoice. Rejoicing is not an easy command to obey; perhaps that why we see it in the Scriptures so often. We must make an effort to rejoice and pursue those things which will bring success. Some of us have stolen the Grinch's Daytimer:

5:00 Wallow in self-pity

5:30 Stare into the abyss

6:00 Solve world hunger, tell no one

7:00 Jazzercise

8:00 Wrestle with my self-loathing

9:00 Stare into the ceiling until I slip slowly into madness

This simply won't do. Christians are to meditate upon the glorious estate granted them by the love of Christ and His cross. We are to utilize all means given by God in this pursuit, things mentioned earlier such as prayer, Scripture reading, sacraments, worship, fellowship, *etc.* In addition, we should seek to catch ourselves when going down a sulky and cantankerous path and make a willful effort to think of why we ought to rejoice. Make an effort at finding out what's good about the day.

Fear Not

The second imperative is also one commonly given by Jesus. Jesus tells them "**do not be afraid.**" We must understand the context. These women lived under the thumb of the Roman Empire and under the oppression of a powerful and corrupt religion. They had seen hope in Jesus, followed and ministered to Him (Mark 15:41). But Jesus had been crucified, His followers fled and they had just seen an angel who was such a scary sight it paralyzed the Roman Soldiers in fear.

These women were living in a context where they could be put to death on a whim or be so easily ostracized from their society that they would die of starvation or exposure. They had much to legitimately fear. We don't generally have that kind of fear in the West. Some of us have had near death experiences through an accident or illness. But for the most part we just aren't afraid.

I think of our cat. He finds a safe place to sleep. If he hears any sound he jumps. There are numerous animals in our neighborhood (raccoons, possums, skunks, dogs) that could kill him in a second. We are not nearly as circumspect as we could be. But a lack of fear can be our greatest enemy. In the same way pain is good in that it reveals injury, fear is good in that it reveals our vulnerable condition.

Maybe we're not fearful so the command not to fear rings empty to us. But there will come a time for all of us when fear will become a reality; and then the command of Jesus, and the authority behind that command (that He has defeated all our enemies, including death itself), will be of great comfort.

We come to the final imperative.

Tell My Brethren

Jesus tells the women "**Go and tell __My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.**" He tells them this while they worshiped at His feet. Should it not be our aim to reach such appreciation and humility of heart that falling at the feet of Jesus would not only be natural but unavoidable. In a birthing class the instructor warned the women that at the onset of labor all vanity is going to fly out the window; would we shed our vanity in our proper worship of the One who is worthy of all praise and allegiance?

These women would soon move from the feet of Jesus and, upon delivering His message, be considered as those who have feet of beauty.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, _"Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7; cf. Romans 10:15)

Christians are to be confident of the power of the message of which Jesus makes them stewards. I have little doubt that these women would

leave Jesus more than ready to deliver the message—for they knew the One to whom the message belongs.

...who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' to the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places (Isaiah 44:26).

My children may attempt to correct each other but when I say “tell them daddy says...” there is much greater confidence.

I would like to conclude this message with something that may not be readily apparent. Jesus is risen. People will often ask me about their departed loved ones, whether they know what we're doing down here. I generally respond, “I don't think they care.” To what extent that may be true, I am not sure. But I know this. The risen Savior does care. He is our Eternal Priest.

And Jesus does not merely tell the women to convey a message to meet in Galilee, He tells the women to “tell My brethren” to meet Him in Galilee (Matthew 28:10). This uneducated, formerly demon-possessed woman is to convey a message to a scattered group of disciples who had denied and abandoned Jesus—and Jesus refers to them as His brethren! Not His betrayers, not His deniers, not His faithless band of cowards, but His brethren!

-For __both He who __sanctifies and those who are being sanctified __are all of one, for which reason __He is not ashamed to call them brethren,⁻¹²⁻ saying: __“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You” (Hebrews 2:11, 12).

When one ponders all the ungodly actions leading to the death of Christ, we might wonder if people could have behaved more appropriately, if God could have run a smoother show with a more compliant cast.

But the monotheistic God (Deuteronomy 6:4) sent His Son (John 3:16) to save us monergistically (all the power coming from one source). Jesus calls us His brethren—His friends.

-No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, __for

all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you (John 15:15).

The most wonderful things have been revealed to us. And because of this Jesus calls us friends—stewards of the grace of God. We are participating ambassadors of the good news of reconciliation with God. But our peace with God does not come about as a result of our faithfulness (at best we're unprofitable servants); it is the faithfulness of Christ alone that brings us peace and true joy.

Can you imagine how wonderful it was for the disciples as they sat dejected and defeated, to learn from the mouth of Mary that Jesus is not only risen, but is not ashamed to call them brethren. Jesus still lives, He remains our High Priest and the grace is bestowed upon all who call upon His Name to this very day.

Questions for Study

1. How are great events generally made known to the public (pages 2, 3)?
2. Who were the first ones to deliver the news of the resurrection? Why is this significant (pages 3, 4)?
3. Is it easy to rejoice? Discuss the topic of God's command to rejoice. How would you go about obeying this (pages 5, 6)?
4. What does the comforting command of Jesus to "fear not" mean to people in a society that seldom experiences fear (page 7)?
5. How would we fall at the feet of Jesus today, now that He is risen (pages 7, 8)?
6. How can someone's feet be beautiful (page 8)?
7. Jesus says "tell My brethren." Why is that noteworthy (page 9)?