

# The Resurrection: Hope and Honor in Christ

## Finding Comfort in the Reality of the Risen Savior

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Good evening and welcome to the auditorium at Calvary Road Baptist Church in Monrovia, California. It is something of a somber gathering of folks this evening because of the passing three hours ago of one of our most faithful and longest serving members, Brian Spicer. His passing causes me to reflect because he was a dear friend, one of the most faithful believers I have ever known. This guy served God even when it hurt badly. When he was in excruciating pain, he just motored on. He and his wife Dolly, who passed a year ago, made a formidable ministry team here at our church. There are so many young people growing up who spent their Saturday mornings with the Spicers involved in ministry in convalescent hospitals. I had the opportunity to spend an hour and a half or so with Brian last night. He was in very good spirits. He was feeling wonderfully. He was pain-free and was talking about that, saying it doesn't look like God was ready to take him yet. His sister indicated that he was in fine fiddle this morning. Then this afternoon he had an appointment at the dialysis clinic, and it was while he was receiving a dialysis treatment that he passed at 4:00.

As soon as memorial services are scheduled, I will let you know. I was thinking over the last hour or so about one of the things that I lighted on as a brand new Christian, because I was a young fellow and I don't know how common it is for someone of my generation, but I think I had rather a bit more experience along this line than most of my peer group, and that is with people in close proximity to me that died. I remember as a little boy, sitting with my great-grandmother as my great-grandfather was slipping away, sitting next to her, and there was a hospital bed in the middle of the living room of their house. I remember noticing that my grandmother, who was an old woman, right? I'm a 13-year-old boy. She was an old woman, and her next younger sister were tending to their father. It dawned on me, and there are some of you here in the auditorium who can relate: no matter your age, when it's daddy who's passing, you're still daddy's little girl. Sometimes those special experiences stay with you for a long time. Brian was one of those very special guys. I had the opportunity to meet him before his conversion. Oh my goodness. I will not relate stories to you, but I remember the Sunday evening that he came to Christ. The word conversion very much applies to him. What makes the passing of someone like him bearable for someone like me is the resurrection. We're going to spend some time dealing with that this evening in our study of God's Word.

I have been a child of God now for 51 years. My goodness, I would hate to face eternity without the expectation of the resurrection, without the promise of the resurrection, the patience of hope. So, pray for his sister, the only surviving sibling. He has a surviving sister-in-law who was married to his brother who passed away, oh my goodness, 25 years ago. He's got an uncle who's 94 years old, living back in Ohio, who goes fishing every day on his boat. He had few survivors,

and so his memorial service will be memorable. I invite you to join with me as we go to the Lord in prayer this evening.

Father, we thank you for your goodness. It's a delight to be able as a child of God to have access to the throne of grace, to be challenged to approach the throne of grace boldly and to lift up those that we care about in prayer. We pray for Ruby. We pray for Patty. We pray for Jim and Karen. We pray for Nazarin. We pray for Susanna and Erica and Sarah's pregnancies. We pray for Greg, for sick loved ones, in addition to those that I've mentioned, for our through-the-Bible reading program, our discipleship ministry, or the Coronitus family as they travel. We also want to continue to remember in prayer Charlie Kirk's wife and two children, how not just the nation but the world has divided, the vitriol that is thrown at his memory. I find it amazing that almost everyone that doesn't embrace him refers to him as a racist. I find it unusual for a guy who has the best friends that he had to be labeled a racist. But we pray that you might comfort his wife, that you might comfort his children, and that you might bless us and comfort us grieving over the loss of our close, dear, and personal friend Brian Spicer. Please now bless our study of your Word and help us that we might live for you, love you, and serve you effectively. And we will thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would, please, to Luke chapter 24. Say, "Aren't you going to spend time talking about Brian?" No. No. I'm going to spend time talking about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ because that was Brian's hope. That's my hope. And if it's not your hope, you are in serious, serious trouble. Your soul is in grave danger. But for the hope of the resurrection, and you have no hope if you have no Christ, that's not something that anybody should allow to slip by or put off to a later time. Isaiah said, "I know not the day of my death." And I think he lived for 20 or 30 more years. My great-grandfather, who I remember watching die, started concerning himself with his death when he was 45. And he died 49 years later. He spent 49 years concerned about his death. That doesn't make any sense. The greater folly is to approach eternity without Christ and not be concerned about it. Excuse me. That's just stupid. That's just dumb because it's the inevitable experience of every person who has ever lived. Next in folly to not being worried about it at all is to be worried about it and not deal with it. And then, of course, there's the child of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

I remember when I was a brand new babe in Christ, I was pondering and reflecting on things of death and eternity and the experiences that I had had even as a young person with these people around me who had died. And it dawned on me that we sorrow but not as others sorrow. And we grieve but not as others grieve because we have a joy mingled with our sorrow. You say, "Well, that's impossible." No, actually it's not. The child of God knows and has experienced sorrow mingled with joy and grief mingled with comfort because our God is the God of all comfort. What a terrible thing to go through life without the comfort of God. Anyway, here we are in Luke chapter 24. We're going to resume with the experiences that are recorded by the four gospel writers, just after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Luke chapter 24 and verse 44, we read, and it came to pass as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Now let's reflect a little bit. I don't want to repeat everything I said last week or the week before or two weeks before or three weeks before, but from Matthew chapter 28 and verse one, we are confident that there were two

Marys. Two women named Mary approached Joseph's tomb in which had been placed the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they approached that tomb on a late Saturday afternoon as sunset was approaching. The last minutes of Sabbath near sundown would be the beginning of the first day of the week. And their purpose in approaching Joseph's tomb was to anoint the Lord's body. How they were going to accomplish it, they hadn't thought it through entirely.

But Matthew chapter 28, verses 2, 3, and 4, if you'll recall, records an earthquake, which I suggest coincides with our Lord's actual resurrection, just as an earthquake had earlier occurred just when he gave up the ghost. So an earthquake when he died, an earthquake when he was raised from the dead. And also at that time, in Matthew 28, verses 2, 3, and 4, an angel from heaven rolling the stone away, several tons, 4,000 pounds, rolled it away. The passage also describes the angel and also makes mention of how frightened the Roman guards that were stationed there to prevent any theft of the body, how frightened those guys were. They fell down on the ground trembling and acted like they were dead.

Now what I'm about to mention is unstated. This is not stated in scripture, but I think it is fairly presumed that after these events that are referred to in verses 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Matthew 28, the two befuddled Marys return to their quarters, wherever they were staying. They didn't live in Jerusalem, but they were visiting Jerusalem because of the high holy days. And they were befuddled. They were confused. They were distraught. There were things going on. Cognitive dissonance magnified, and so they left and went back to wherever they would sleep that night, if they could sleep that night.

Now keep in mind from Mark 16, verses 2 through 5, and John 20, verse 1, and Luke 24, verses 1, 2, and 3, those three passages show Mary Magdalene and the others, and how many others we don't really know, returning to Joseph's tomb, and the descriptive language shows us that they were returning early Sunday morning as opposed to Matthew 28, verse 1, which was late Saturday night. And they were so early on Sunday morning that it was before the crack of dawn. And as they are approaching Joseph's tomb for the second time by two of the Marys, first time for the others, they were wondering among themselves who would roll the stone away. You say, "Hold it a second." No, you hold it a second. Have you ever been thoroughly confused? Have you ever been totally befuddled? Have you ever wondered whether or not what you saw, you saw? What you heard, you heard? What you did, you did? Have you never walked out of a room wondering if you turned the light switch off and then you step back in and you flip it down and you walk out and you get about 10 feet and you wonder whether you turned the light switch off and you go back and no, it's off. And you go and you're walking 15 or 20 feet and then you wonder again, so distracted and your mind is racing and did I turn that light switch off, and you went and it was turned off. Don't tell me you've never done that. People have done that.

I remember one time, maybe 38 or 39 years ago here at the church, a guy came to the church, got out of his car, walked in, and told me, "I locked my keys in my car." And so I didn't have a slim jim on me. Those are illegal. So I used a coat hanger. Those are not legal either, but I knew how to do that. And so I got back into his car. It was a big Chrysler, and he went someplace, came back, and he got out of his car and walked back into the church. Said, "I left my keys in my car again. I locked myself out." He ended up locking himself out of the car. My daughter's back there thinking, "Are you sure that wasn't you, Dad?" No, it wasn't me. It wasn't me. It was him.

He locked his keys in his car, locked himself out of his car three times in the space of about 90 minutes. And so don't tell me that you can't go someplace, observe something, witness something, it's not what you expect, it's not what you can imagine, and you walk off and you continue to live on and think as though it didn't happen.

I think that's what happened to these two Marys. Something happened. They saw, they witnessed, they observed, but they went back home confused, befuddled. No, no, no. That couldn't happen. That couldn't happen. So, they come back the next day, and they're talking about who's going to roll the stone away. Excuse me. You saw the stone rolled away the night before. But that's not the way the human mind operates. The human mind, especially the memory, does not recollect facts. Studies and studies and studies have shown when you do not remember facts, you remember impressions. And if the impression is radically different than what you expect or what you can accept, then your memory of the event either doesn't exist or is severely distorted.

And so they come back early Sunday morning before dawn wondering among themselves who would roll the stone away and, of course, finding the stone already rolled away. So entering the tomb, and I don't know how far they went, maybe just sticking their heads in, looking around. Okay, they found no body. Not nobody, no body, but there was an angel seated there. And in these tombs that they would carve out of the side of solid rock, they would very frequently put ledges that you could sit on, that if there wasn't a body wrapped up decomposing and desiccating over a year or so, there would be room for a person to go in and just sit down. You could sit down on this side, you could sit down on this side, you might be able to sit down on that side. If the family was wealthy, as succeeding generations died, they would carve out more. And after the body had died, they would take the bones and put it in a bone box called an ossuary. And they would take it and stack it and take another one, stack it. Another year they would take it and stack it. But this Joseph's tomb had never before been used. It was brand new. Had never been used before.

And so they stick their head in, and there was an angel sitting there. Now Luke's account has a few more details than the other gospels in that he reported that there were two who he described as men. Okay, they weren't men, they were angels, but he is describing them. And he pointed out that they were wearing dazzling apparel. Radiant, titanium white. And this brings us to the conversation that ensued between one of the women and one of the angels.

So if you would turn back to Matthew chapter 28, verse 5, we see beginning with verse 5: And the angel answered, and I think he was answering the question that these women were asking each other, and said unto the women, because he's talking to them. And he said to them, "Fear not, ye, for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified." So these gals were scared by what they saw. I don't think approaching the tomb they were afraid. But when things ended up being very different than what they imagined, they were taken aback. They were wondering.

Verse six reads, the angel continuing to talk: "He is not here, for he is risen, as he said." In other words, he's the angel saying he did what he said he was going to do. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Now, if you would turn to Mark chapter 16 and verse 6, another account of the same conversation: And he saith unto them, "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen. He is not here: behold the place where they laid him." And now turn to

Luke chapter 24. We look at verses 5 and 6: And as they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, they the first day, as the angels said unto them, the ladies, the women that were there, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He’s not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.” You remember what he said?

Now, let’s pause and let me relate to you my estimation of what took place. My estimation is that the two Marys came to Joseph’s tomb approaching sunset the evening before. They witnessed the earthquake and the rolling away of the stone by an angel. And then in bewilderment, they hurried away, returning some 10 hours later, Sunday morning before dawn, likely with companions, in a state of shock and not believing what they had witnessed the evening before. They saw it. They heard it. They felt it. 10 hours later, they didn’t believe. They saw what they saw, heard what they heard, felt what they felt. They didn’t believe it because it was so different from what they anticipated. So different than what they expected that I think their memories betrayed them. Memory is not infallible.

So they and their additional companions who returned the next morning wondered about the obstacle of the large stone over the opening of the tomb, only to see that it was already removed. They then looked into the tomb, found no corpse, but there were angels. And a conversation ensued. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the emotional state of the women, that they were terrified, with one of the angels speaking to calm them and inform them. The three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, also record the angels verbally declaring what the women had observed. They said what they saw: “He is not here, for he is risen.” They were then urged, that is to say, the women were urged by the angel to see for themselves what they had likely already observed in the tomb. So my guess is they stick their head in, they step back, the angel starts talking. “No, take a look for yourself. Look for yourself.” They go back in there. They’re doing the whole thing, you know. Get out the pin light, look around, you know. Turn it back on. Put it back in there, lapel pocket. And so they gave the tomb a good look over. They examined it. They verified what they had initially noticed that it was empty.

And at that point, Luke rehearsed the Lord’s previous prediction to them: “Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee? You remember what he said?” Now before dealing with the action the angels urged the women to take, allow me two observations.

First, if the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was not real, if you’re here this evening and you’re not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you don’t believe the resurrection was real. You don’t believe that it was real. You’ve heard me preach on it many, many, many times. All the fact that most historians, the great majority of historians believe the resurrection occurred. They can’t explain it. They don’t like it, but they can’t deny it. But you do. You deny it. So, let’s assume if the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was not real, if you’re right, that means that the resurrection narrative is the contrivance of liars, deceivers, tricksters, fraudulent grifters. But if that’s the case, they would have arranged for the first witnesses—let me rephrase that. Would they have arranged for these liars, these guys that are building this narrative, they’re creating a narrative. Yeah, let’s convince everybody he rose from the dead. Yeah, let’s convince everybody he rose from the dead. And they’re working on that narrative. Would they have arranged for the first witnesses of the resurrection to be women?

Certainly not. In the first century, Middle East, women were not considered by anyone—not even first century women considered first century women to be reliable witnesses. Even in Jewish society, they were not recognized as credible witnesses. Even in a culture where women had the highest standing of women in any culture in the world was Jewish culture before the arrival of the Christian faith. No one had status in their culture like a Jewish woman had in her culture until Christianity came along, and then the position of women in the eyes of believers was even more exalted.

So, if you're going to build a fake narrative, do you select two women as your first witnesses? Do you want to start off with a liability like that? Is that the way you would do it? Additional to that, would these fake narrative builders, these liars, these grifters, these malevolent deceivers, would they have choreographed their female witnesses to show up at the burial site at sundown, ending a Sabbath, to then go home without telling anyone, and then to come back before sunrise the next morning without telling anyone? Does that make any sense? If your goal is to control the narrative, that is not the way you go about it. So your belief that the resurrection is not real doesn't hold any water. Doesn't hold any water.

You see, to manipulate the narrative, to advance or perpetuate a fraudulent deception, which people that deny the resurrection believe, your witnesses would have to be men, not women. If we're going to pull this off, we've got to get some guys. Nobody's going to believe women. And they have to be men of good standing. They have to be reputable guys. And we need a number of them. We need three, four, five, six guys. So why use, if you're faking it, as those who deny the resurrection are implying, if they're faking it, why use two women and not six or eight or ten men as witnesses if the resurrection is not actual, not real, not genuine? The two women were the first witnesses of the resurrection because Christ's resurrection was genuine. It was real. It actually happened. And it occurred with proof that was so overwhelming that God in his providence selected two women to be the first witnesses, the weakest witnesses possible at that time and in that cultural setting. Why did he do that? Because the proof of Christ's resurrection was more than overwhelming. More than overwhelming. So, put that in your pipe and smoke it when you get home. I'm not being literal as well.

Second observation related to the resurrection. Consider that only with biblical Christianity, the faith once delivered to the saints, is the equality of women with men in the eyes of God explicitly stated in scripture. It's not the case with Islam. It's not the case with Judaism. It's not the case with Hinduism, where they used to burn women alive on their husband's funeral pyre. It's not the case with Buddhists. Certainly not the case with Native American religions in North or South America or the animists of South Asia. No. Only biblical Christianity explicitly states that men and women are equal in the sight of God. Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Only the faith that I embrace. So if you're not a Christian, you cannot credibly assert that you believe in the equality of men and women because the communists didn't believe in the equality of men and women. Marxism—do you realize when Vladimir Lenin established communism in the Soviet Union, "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs"? Did you know that in the first weeks of communism they abolished marriage, and that a comrade who is a man could walk up to any comrade who is a female and demand sex from her, "from those

that are able to provide to those who have the need”? How about it, comrade? Because no communist woman was allowed to say no to any man. You say, “Well, how long did that last?” About ten days. And then there was such a blowback on that that the communists had to walk that back and say, “No, no, no, no. We’re going to recognize marriage.” So, the tenets of communism. So, you say, “Well, I’m a socialist.” Then you don’t believe in the equality of men and women. “Well, I’m a communist.” You don’t believe in the equality of men and women. “I’m a Buddhist.” You don’t believe in the equality of men and women. “I’m a Hindu.” You don’t believe in the equality of men and women. “I’m a Muslim.” You certainly don’t believe in the equality of men and women, where in a court of law a woman’s testimony counts for half of the testimony of a guy. That’s under Islam.

The only belief system known to man that acknowledges explicitly the equality of men and women is the Christian faith. So unbelievers, you don’t believe that. You don’t believe that. Now, I’ve heard unsaved guys say, “Well, I’m a feminist.” Yeah, you can talk all you want to, but it doesn’t mean anything. Doesn’t mean anything. So, explicitly stated in the New Testament, this reality is implicit in the Hebrew scriptures where men and women are both shown to bear God’s image. Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 9:6. In the Hebrew scriptures, there’s an acknowledgement that every human being bears the image of God. And so that’s implicitly understood that we are therefore equal in the sight of God. And yeah, I understand. I’ve been around long enough to recognize that feminists shriek about discrimination and the injustices of Christianity, but theirs is a hollow protest against God being God and arranging his creation according to his sovereign will and wisdom, which feminists don’t like.

1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3 declares God’s functional hierarchies where it reads, “But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.” Notice, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 11:3, that a man’s head is stated by the Apostle Paul to be Christ. A woman’s head is the man, and the head of Christ is God the Father. Since each person of the triune Godhead is shown throughout scripture to be co-equal, co-eternal, and co-divine, what is shown by this verse is the existence of a functional hierarchy in God’s arrangement. Thus, while Christ is functionally subordinate to God the Father, he is in no way inferior, with the same being true of men and women. Both sexes equal in the sight of God while occupying different positions in God’s functional hierarchy.

What occurred here then is an example of God honoring the women, here being the witnesses to the resurrection, the first witnesses to the resurrection. God honored those women by giving them the opportunity to be the first witnesses despite being functionally subordinate to men. They were privileged to be the first human witnesses of the resurrection from the dead of the Son of God. God thereby honoring them.

Well, let’s pray. Father, thank you for your goodness, the opportunity to study your Word. We pray that you might help us to do right, that you might bless our season of prayer to follow. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen. Amen.