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April 5, 2026

OUR TASK: MATTHEW 28:1-10,16-20

Introduction (ETB LG, 67): “Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 54 [See Notes Box.] of the PSG. Highlight September 11, 2001, and allow adults to share where they were on that day.

Encourage the group to identify other significant cultural events people might remember in the same way. (*Examples: a celebrity dying, a space shuttle disaster, a hurricane or tornado strike*)

Ask: *Why do you think we are selective in what we remember and what we forget?* (PSG, p. 54)”

Summarize and Transition: Last week, we explored a parable from Matthew 18. In chapter 19, verse 1, we see, “When Jesus had finished saying these things, he departed from Galilee and went to the region of Judea across the Jordan.” Jesus is beginning His journey to Jerusalem and the cross. Today we are going to skip to the end because today is Easter. In our passage, we are going to see the response of some disciples on that day and the task Jesus gives them before He ascends to the Father.

1. BELIEVE (MATT. 28:1-7)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew 28:1-7.

Explain: Easter morning for these ladies did not start as your Easter morning might have. You might have begun your day with Easter baskets or some other Easter tradition. Maybe you attended a sunrise service. If you did, you were up at the same time as these women. They made their way to the tomb of Jesus as early as they could on the morning following the Sabbath. Mark tells us they were going to anoint Jesus’ dead body (Mark 16:1). According to Matthew, they experienced a violent earthquake on the way. This is the second earthquake in the account surrounding Jesus’ death and resurrection. The first one marked the death of Christ. This one attends the descent of the angel to announce His resurrection. Matthew’s account can be subdivided and labeled Information, Invitation, and Instructions

Optional Activity: “Group adults into three teams with the assignments below. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they discussed in their teams.

- **Team 1:** Identify the information provided by the angel in verses 5-6 and why it’s important.
- **Team 2:** Identify the invitation extended by the angel in verse 6 and why it’s important.
- **Team 3:** Identify the instructions given by the angel in verse 7 and why they are important.” (ETB LG, 69)

Teacher’s Note: If you do not do the activity above, you can simply relay the information below as presented.

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Matthew* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* (NAC)
- *Exalting Christ in Matthew* (Exalting)
- *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Matthew 14-28* (ACCS)
- *The King Has Come* (Spurgeon)

“Most of us often remember the details of the moments we received bad news. We probably remember where we were and what we were doing on September 11, 2001. Interestingly, sometimes we don’t remember details when we receive good news. The joy of the news overshadows the specifics of how and when the news was received. This was not the case for the eyewitnesses to Jesus’s resurrection. They could look back on the greatest news of all and remember vividly.” (PSG, 54)

The Information: (Reread verse 5-6a—See Notes Box) The first words out of the angel’s mouth when the women arrive are, “Don’t be afraid.” Fear is often associated with the appearance of an angel. Verse 4 tells us that the Roman soldiers—men trained for violence and well acquainted with death—were “shaken by fear of him [and fell down] like dead men” when they encountered the angel. The women, however, remained long enough to hear the angel’s reassuring words. The angel confirms that they are looking for “Jesus who was crucified.” Just days earlier, Jesus had been crucified on a Roman cross and had truly died—He did not merely faint. The Gospel accounts make clear that the Roman soldiers, experts in execution, pronounced Him dead. Then two “secret disciples” prepared His dead body for the tomb. They would not have done so if there was any possibility that Christ was still alive. After affirming Jesus’ death, the angel proclaims the most glorious words in the New Testament: “He is not here. For he has risen.” Jesus did not remain in the grave. He rose from the dead just as He had foretold—at least five times in Matthew’s Gospel alone (12:40; 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32).

Matthew 28:5-6a

⁵ 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 risen, just as he said.

Discuss: How do you think the ladies would have responded to the information given by the angel?

Explain: The gospels tell us the ladies had been witnesses to Christ’s death (Matt. 27:55-56). They came to the tomb that morning expecting to find a dead body. When the angel reports that He had risen, they might have experienced confusion, disbelief, or excitement. Confusion or disbelief might be more accurate because of the invitation given by the angel.

The Invitation: In verse 6b, the angel invites them to inspect the tomb. Their inspection of the tomb would not *prove* that Jesus had been raised. But it would provide evidence to confirm what He had foretold. We know something that the ladies might not have known yet: stone had not been moved away before the angel arrived (v. 2). Jesus had risen from the dead and miraculously left the tomb before the stone was removed.

The invitation to investigate the tomb can remind us that people are encouraged to investigate the assertion that Jesus rose from the dead. Encourage your group to read Lee Stobbal’s book *The Case for Christ*. It is an easily readable text. Even if they do not read the book, it is a good resource to be aware of when talking to those who ask questions about the resurrection of Jesus. You can also suggest that your group subscribe to Bro J’s new podcast based on the book *Body of Proof*. He goes beyond the content of the book to provide some apologetic information for those asking questions.

The Instruction: After providing information and issuing an invitation, the angel gives the ladies instructions to go tell the disciples. This is important for us to remember. When we know about the resurrection of Jesus, we should go and tell others. We will come back to this in the final section of our lesson. But, interestingly, this message was first delivered by women.

God's choice to use these ladies as the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection is telling. In first-century culture, the testimony of women was not usually allowed in court. If the resurrection was a ruse, two women would not have been chosen as the first eyewitnesses.

Summarize Transition: On this glorious Easter morning, this Resurrection Day, the ladies had expected the worst. They expected to continue their mourning and try to figure out what to do with their lives. God had a different plan. The mission and ministry of Jesus were to continue through his disciples, then and now. The angel informs them of Jesus' resurrection, invites them to investigate the evidence themselves, and instructs them to go tell others. That is the same process for us today—learn about Christ's death and resurrection, come to the place of believing it, and then tell others about it.

In the next passage, the ladies are going to encounter Christ himself. Let's explore that.

2. WORSHIP (MATT. 28:8-10)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew 28:8-10.

Explain: In this short passage, we can glimpse the women's response to the situation, their response to the risen Lord, and Jesus' response to the situation.

Their Response to the Situation: Matthew tells us that upon receiving instruction from the angel, the women set off running to tell the disciples. The narrative reveals that they were both "afraid yet filled with joy." (NIV) This mixture of emotion might be expected. The fear might reflect that "they do not fully understand" (ETBC, 60) what is going on. Nevertheless, they are joyful—a real bona fide angel had just met them and revealed Jesus' resurrection. Their mixed emotions are understandable.

Their Response to Jesus: Matthew records an event that no other gospel writer addresses: Jesus met these ladies on their journey back to the disciples. When they see Jesus, they recognize Him. This is important, and we see the same thing in other resurrection accounts: the post-resurrection Jesus was recognizable to those who saw Him. When they saw Him, they "took hold of his feet, and worshiped him." In order to take hold of Jesus' feet, the women had to fall to the ground. "Grasping someone's feet expressed submission and homage to a king." (ETBC, 60) The ladies did not simply express homage. They worshiped the Lord. We have seen the male disciples worship Jesus prior to this (after Peter walked on the water and Jesus calmed the storm, Matt 14:33). For a faithful Jew to worship anything or anyone other than God would be blasphemy. Therefore, it is clear that these ladies viewed Christ as God Himself. We should also note that this narrative again gives us proof of the resurrection. Some would claim that the disciples only *thought they* saw

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Matt 18:26

At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything."

Colossians 2:14

He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.¹

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Jesus or hallucinated because of their great grief. This event demonstrates the physical reality of Christ's presence after the resurrection.

Jesus' Response to the Situation: Jesus reassures the ladies in the same way as the angel. He tells them not to be afraid. Jesus understands that there was nothing to fear. Moreover, this Resurrection Morning was meant for joy, not fear. Jesus also reiterates the instruction of the angel. The ladies were to go tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee. But we should note that Jesus' response to the situation also reveals a new kind of situation. He refers to the disciples as His brothers. "This is the only time in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus identified the apostles with this intimate relational term (see John 20:17)." (EBT LG, 68) In the post-resurrection era, the familial connection between Christ and His followers is more acutely prominent. The use of the word "brothers" to refer to the disciples also reveals Jesus emotional relationship with the men. "By using the term Jesus was communicating to them that in spite of their previous failure [of deserting Him in His time of need], they were still His brothers and disciples, who would share in the work of spreading the gospel of salvation." (ETBC, 61)

Discuss: Before we get to that task of spreading the gospel, why do you think it was important for the women to worship Jesus? Why is it important for us to worship Him corporately?

Explain: Worship was the only reasonable response by the ladies who realized who Jesus really was. It is telling that He consistently allowed people to worship Him throughout His ministry and after His resurrection. This reveals that Jesus knew who He really was. Those who espouse that Jesus never claimed to be God do not understand that by allowing others to worship Him Jesus *was* proclaiming His divinity. Those of us who claim the name of Jesus today should gladly and wholeheartedly worship Him privately and corporately. Not only is He God, but He is also the God who saved us from our sin.

Summarize and Transition: The instruction for the disciples to join Jesus in Galilee has now been mentioned twice. Jesus and His disciples had spent the majority of their ministry in Galilee, and now He wants them to join Him there one final time. Neither the angel nor Jesus tells them where to meet in Galilee, but it appears they know where to go because in the next passage they will meet him on "the mountain." Before telling us what takes place in Galilee, Matthew provides us with a short narrative revealing the response by the religious leaders to the situation. Upon hearing about the events in the garden, the chief priests concoct a conspiracy to accuse the disciples of stealing Jesus' body so they could claim He had risen. It appears their plan worked to some extent because even at the time of the gospel's writing the story was still spreading among the Jews (Matt. 28:15). Nevertheless, the only remedy for a lie is the truth, and Jesus is going to instruct the disciples to go therefore and tell the truth.

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3. SHARE (MATT. 28:16-20)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew 28:16-20.

Explain: Matthew tells us the disciples traveled to Galilee “to the mountain where Jesus had directed them.” Either they had received more instructions that were not given in the text, or when Jesus told them to go, they understood where He meant without having to be told. It really does not matter how they knew where to go. We just know they went and met Jesus. When they meet Him on the mountain, it is An Ambiguous Welcome.

An Ambiguous Welcome: Matthew tells us, “they worshiped, but some doubted.” “The Greek word for doubted refers more to hesitation than unbelief...Perhaps they still struggled with some confusion about how to behave in the presence of an exalted and holy being.” (ETBC, 62) Regardless of why there was still some hesitation among the group, worship overrode any ambiguity of their reaction to Jesus. Jesus did not stand at a distance. He reveals His desire to be among them on this important last day because He “came near to them.” The resurrected Christ did not stand above them in judgment. Instead, He walked up to them.

Unambiguous Authority: When He approached them, He said: “All authority had been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Clearly, only God had *all authority* over heaven and earth. This is again a reference to Christ’s identity. However, it is also important for this moment because Jesus is about to commission these disciples to a great ministry, and He does so out of that authority. Verse 19 begins “Go, *therefore*.” We might read that as “All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Therefore, go...” It is not as their rabbi or friend that He commissioned them. Instead, it was as the resurrected God-man that He tells them what to do next. He is about to commission them to An All-Encompassing Ministry.

An All-Encompassing Ministry: We call verses 19-20 the Great Commission. We might call it great because it is a *big task*. It is a big task to do *anything* that includes “all nations.” We might call it great because it is a *big deal*. It would be a big deal to take the gospel to the nations. We might also call it great because it is all-encompassing. Let’s see how it is all-encompassing. First, we should note that “the commission has one main imperative verb, make disciples.” (ETBC, 63) That is the one thing the disciples, and we, are to accomplish among the nations—make disciples. Following this command, Jesus gives “three subordinate participles—‘go,’ ‘baptizing,’ and ‘teaching.’” (ETBC, 63) The three subordinate participles reveal the all-encompassing nature of the ministry given to the disciples and to us. First, followers of Jesus must go to make disciples. Now you can interpret that to mean leave one place and go to another. Or you can interpret it as “as you are going.” Both interpretations are necessary. Some believers must go, and all believers must “duplicate themselves wherever they may be.” (NAC, 431) Both require intentionality. In going and on the go, believers make disciples whom they must baptize. However, baptism is not the first thing a go-er must do. First, he

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must share the gospel, and someone must receive that gospel message. Only after a person becomes a believer should they be baptized. In baptism, a person identifies with the redeemed body of Christ—both the universal body of Christ and the local body of Christ. Sharing the gospel and baptizing someone is not the end of making disciples. Jesus instructs believers to “teach [new believers] to observe everything I have commanded you.” The act of making disciples does not end with conversion. It is incumbent upon believers and the church to teach people *how to follow Jesus*. The teaching ministry of the church is paramount to fulfilling the Great Commission. If all we do is get people saved and baptized, we are failing in obedience, and we are failing people. A Christian who never learns the ways of Christ will falter and struggle his or her entire life. The church and its leaders in the church must find ways to bring people to the Word and help them understand it.

Discuss: Ask the group to consider where they might be struggling in fulfilling the Great Commission—going, making baptize-able converts, teaching others? How can a person struggling in those areas take their next step forward?

Explain: The Holy Spirit should always be moving us forward in our walk with the Lord. He wants us to take our next step. Maybe you have not publicly identified with Christ in baptism. That might be the next step. Maybe you need to move from worshipping the Lord to learning about the Lord’s Word in a small group. Maybe you need to become a person who goes away to share the gospel. Maybe you need to become a person who more intentionally shares the gospel “as you go.” Maybe you need to become a person who helps others discover the Word through study. You can become a person who regularly invites others to join your small group. Or maybe you can become a person who learns how to teach others and then go about teaching them.

Summarize and Transition: Whichever way you respond to the Great Commission is between you and the Holy Spirit. However, we should realize that on the Galilean hillside Jesus gave the Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion. If we do not do our individual part in fulfilling it, we are living in disobedience.

CONCLUDE

Today, we looked at the great events that took place on Easter morning. The ladies learn about Jesus’ resurrection. They worshipped the resurrected Lord as God. All of the disciples received the only command reasonable in response to His resurrection—Go and Tell others.

There are two basic responses to this lesson.

1. Respond to the Lord’s call to salvation if you have not already
2. Ask the Holy Spirit how you can participate in the Great Commission.

Close in prayer.

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