

# Easter Sunday Worship Service 4\_17\_2022

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:04

We are going to take some time now to get a little more deeply into God's Word together. So as I invite you to do every week, I hope that you will have a copy of scripture out and open in front of you this morning. If that's a personal Bible or Bible app that you have, I would invite you to open that. If you need something, there are red Bibles available in all the pews. And this morning, we will be in the Gospel of Mark. So right at the start of the New Testament, find Matthew and then mark, and we'll be at the very end of Mark's gospel here this morning. And again, I hope you'll have that out. So we can look at that and spend some time in it here together.

00:41

What feelings do you typically associate with Easter? What feelings maybe do you have even this morning as you're gathered here?

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joy,

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hope,

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comfort,

00:55

obligation, apathy.

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What are you feeling this morning?

01:01

You know, it's interesting to notice what the gospel accounts record the people who were there at Jesus first resurrection is feeling that morning, it says that they were alarmed,

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says they were frightened.

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So they were perplexed. It says they were astonished with what was happening there. And they didn't know what to make of this. Why?

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Why would the good news of Jesus produce those kinds of reactions from people who first encountered an empty tomb and arisen Lord, and how might those kinds of reactions, maybe help us to better grasp what it is it's actually happening here this day?

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This morning, we're going to look at another resurrection account that we find in Mark's gospel and and if you've never heard this one before, you may be surprised by some of the things that he includes in there. Even if you've heard this one 100 times before, I want you to listen. Because you may find that it challenges the complacency that too many of us bring to a day like this. Before we get into it, though, let me invite you once more, to pray with me.

02:01

Great and gracious God, we come with distracted minds and with distraught hearts. So we pray that you would calm us

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that you would comfort us

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that you would help us to focus on you. As we listened to your word give us a fresh understanding of your grace, and live in us by your Spirit.

02:23

Lord, I pray that the words of my own mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight for We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

02:36

Each one of the four accounts for Gospel accounts includes a story of the Resurrection morning there at the beginning of the service we heard and part of the recording part of the account that Luke records in his Gospel. Most people agree that Mark was the earliest of the written gospels, it was probably written down about 20 years or so after Jesus death and resurrection, and that it reflects the eyewitness accounts of Peter who was himself there that morning. So that's just something to have in mind. As you hear these words, we're going to look at Mark chapter 16, verses one through eight. This again is the word of the Lord.

03:12

When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. And very early, on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb. And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back, it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

03:43

And he said to them, Do not be alarmed. You see, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, He has risen, he is not here, see the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him, just as he told you.

04:02

They went out and fled from the tomb for trembling, and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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That's an interesting ending, isn't it?

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This is what I want to consider with you here this morning. First, what is so unique about marks ending? Why does it end in such an interesting and kind of unique way? And then second, how it is that wonder and trembling and astonishment had seized the women who were there that morning? Why was that their response? Then we'll consider how it is that the resurrection changes everything before finally asking, how do we respond then to those things?

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If this is what's happened, if this is what it means, how do we respond to that?

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Let's look a little more at marks ending though here. It is a rather unique ending and one of the first questions that comes up is where exactly does Mark's gospel end? You may notice that in your Bibles, you may see that most of them will have verses nine through 20.

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In little brackets, and it may say something like the earliest manuscripts don't have these. And the historical evidence does show us that the earliest copies of Mark's gospel that we have stopped at the end of verse eight, but very early on and very regularly, those other verses were included, they have a long history of acceptance and use within the church. If you look at the literary evidence, Mark has a very terse style, a particular kind of a vocabulary that he uses. And what you find in those final verses are a little bit different from that. It seems like they're borrowing material from some of the other Gospel accounts in order to provide a more satisfactory ending, because they too probably said, That's a weird way to end your gospel. There's more to the story than that. So the material that they contain, its faithful to the rest of the biblical witness it is, it's faithful to the rest of the biblical witness. And you can consider them a legitimate epilogue to what Mark himself wrote. But Mark was trying to have a kind of abrupt ending there. And you say why?

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It's also important to remember this, by the time that Mark wrote this gospel, churches had been planted all throughout the Mediterranean region. In fact, most of the letters that we have in the New Testament had already been written and circulated widely. And all of them talk about the fact that Jesus is risen, that he is alive, that He is Lord. So Mark knew that everybody had that information. The women may have been silent that first morning, but they didn't stay silent. They did go out and tell that good news, Mark knew that his readers knew that he knew that his readers knew that. So he's trying to show us something here. He's trying to show us that the resurrection, and the new reality that it launches is stunning news, staggering news, news that we can't really get our heads and hearts around at first encounter. That's what I want to consider with you here. That is, our ending is meant to show us that for those who experienced it that first morning, that's what we see. We see that trembling and astonishment had seized them as mark indicates there.

06:59

Now Jesus had on at least on at least three occasions, he had told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem in order to die. And then on the third day, he would rise again, we can assume that they had spread that word, at least among some of the inner circles, most likely these women had heard that and yet, they still didn't actually expect to find that.

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They went there that morning, prepared to engage in some Jewish ceremony, burial ceremonies and customs that they had there. It says in verse one, that they took spices and oils to anoint him that was part of the tradition, part of the ceremonial practice. They couldn't do it earlier than that. Jesus died on Friday afternoon at sunset, that day was the beginning of the Sabbath. So they couldn't do it, then they wanted their first occasion they could. And they went there to perform those things. But what they encountered did not meet their expectations. And they didn't know what to do with that.

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Even on their way there, they said, Who's going to move the stone for us, because if you look back, the very last verse of chapter 47 tells us that those women were there, they saw the tomb sealed up. Matthew goes on to include the extra detail that after the stone was put in place, Pilate, the governor had it sealed, and had some guards placed in front of it. So they didn't expect to find it moved out of the way when they got there. And yet it was, and then they went in, in the body of Jesus was not there.

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I can't say for sure what expectations they had that morning. But a dead body being where they left, it was probably on the list.

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And they showed up and he wasn't there. And then they hear this announcement that Jesus is risen. Mark says there was a young man dressed in white clothes, Matthew and John's Gospel make explicit what John was, or what Mark was clearly implying here is that this was an angel. This was an angel announcing this good news.

08:41

I pretty regularly get asked what the Church believes about various social or political or theological topics, and those things are important to discuss. But the one claim about which the church must be crystal clear before anything else, the one stance we must take, that cannot ever be ambiguous and does not depend upon public opinion polls, is the announcement that morning, Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified is risen.

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That's it. That's the heart of it.

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Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified is risen. That's that's a very specific claim. It's got a very particular content. If you were here with us last week, we talked about that that's a necessity in our faith. We make specific claims with particular content about what we believe this is exactly one of those things Jesus of Nazareth, the one who called the seas, the one who fed the multitudes the one who healed the sick and welcomed downcast, the one who gave sight to the blind, the one who heralded the kingdom of God, that one. He was crucified

09:45

for the sins of His people taking the just judgment that hangs over our heads upon himself and getting rid of that penalty of sin and he this one is risen.

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Now, that's not a metaphor. Sometimes we talked about the rest

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erection is if it's a metaphor, like you just get a second chance Jesus was raised bodily, visibly on the third day, the rest of the New Testament goes on to say people ate meals with him. They talked with him, they saw Him they heard him, he appeared to a lot of different people, sometimes individually, sometimes in small groups, we're told on at least one occasion to more than 500 people at one time. So by any historical criteria, Jesus resurrection is one of the most well attested events in the ancient world, those who disbelieve that he was bodily invisibly raised from the dead, do so not because the evidence is lacking, but because the idea of resurrection is just too far for them to go.

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And that was even the first instinct of the women that morning, it would have been the first instinct of anyone that morning. You know, sometimes you hear news or you see something, you say, I, you gotta give me a minute here. I'm going to need to try to get my head around this. That's exactly what's going on there trembling and astonishment had seized them, because they recognize the staggering implications of this. They knew that this is not what was supposed to happen to dead bodies.

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Occasionally, you'll hear things like people people will suggest occasionally that well, it was easy for ancient people to believe in the resurrection because they didn't know any better. They were hopelessly pre scientific. They were prone to accept all kinds of superstitions and fables. But we in the modern world with our enlightened minds, we are not prone to accepting such kind of fables as that. And that's the attitude that CS Lewis very famously called chronological snobbery.

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Like the women at the tomb may not have known how to play an Xbox game, or drive a car or post a Tiktok video or split an atom. But they knew that when something was dead, it was dead. They knew that they understand how this works, and Jesus was dead. And crucifixion was a cruelly perfected form of execution if you didn't die from asphyxiation or dehydration, then that spear thrust that it said, the Roman Centurion did, that was a killing stroke designed to pierce the heart. And if somehow that didn't do it, he was in a tomb buried almost certainly airtight for a day and a half, they knew that this Jesus was dead. And if this Jesus was alive again, well, then that changes things.

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And they understood that that's why they responded the way that they did this claim that Jesus is alive. It's at the very center of the Christian faith, but from that it reaches out and it impacts every aspect of our faith, and every single area of our life. Resurrection changes everything.

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The resurrection doesn't fit into. It doesn't fit into any of our understandings or our experiences. But it does tap into our deepest longings.

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There's a Danish philosopher named Soren Kierkegaard and one of his books, he said this in the grave, there is rest, but beside the grave, there is no rest. He was saying when we are faced with the reality of our mortality with death, when the shadow of death hangs over us, he says, that's a that's an uncomfortable, it's a terrifying Specter, we are unsettled by that we're not at rest,

13:07

and the impulse to avoid or somehow circumvent dead, it shows itself in all kinds of stories that we tell and all kinds of projects that we undertake. It's just a couple examples. One very popular streaming show right now is upload it said in the near future, where people can people who die can upload their consciences to the digital afterlife of their choosing, and their loved ones can continue to interact with them. Now, it's categorized as a sci fi comedy drama, though there's an actual product out right now called hereafter, where they asked you to submit voicemails, emails, text messages, anything that a loved one of yours has left behind. And they create a neural network for that to produce a Siri like chat bot so you can talk with your loved one after they have gone. So there are

things that we are doing based on current technology that make the past we think, Well, maybe it is possible to overcome that we're thinking that maybe this is possible. But every single generation, every story, every culture has told some kind of story and has undertaken some kind of project to try to avoid or circumvent these things. Everything from the search for the fountain of youth to daily multivitamins isn't a is an attempt to escape death or extend life.

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Every one of them there's an impulse there, we recognize that and the burden of that longing,

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the burden of that longing to somehow escaped death and extend life, it weighs most heavily. When we find ourselves as Kierkegaard said, beside the grave.

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When we go through a global pandemic, when we see war in Ukraine, when there's famine, or cancer, or tragic accidents are shootings in our city, when our mortality is clearly exposed, so to is our longing to hear that someone has dealt with this

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and the resurrection changes than this because it Institute's an entirely new reality.

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There's a Dutch Reformed theologian named Herman Bhavan, who once said this, the physical resurrection of Christ is not an isolated historical fact. It's inexhaustibly rich and meaning for Christ Himself, for the church, and for the whole world.

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In exhaustively written meaning for Christ himself for the church, and the whole world, it is inexhaustible. But I think there are at least three major implications that I want to just give you quickly here right now, three major implications. The first one is that death has been defeated.

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We see in the red that we see in the crucifixion on on Friday, we see in the crucifixion on Friday, that Jesus has dealt with our sin that God Himself in the flesh has taken on the penalty of our rebellion upon himself, he's dealt with that. And then we see in the empty tomb that death itself has been defeated that the greatest weapon in the arsenal of the enemy has been stripped of its power, that

the grave is no longer some prison from which none can escape, that the immovable stone stone has been rolled away. Like Jesus didn't raise from the grave only to die again. Sometime later, He is ALIVE, He is risen. And the resurrection confirms that death is not the final word in the story any longer. That's the first thing.

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The second is that the resurrection shows us that Jesus is Lord overall.

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It's in Matthew 28, after his resurrection that Jesus says all authority, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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If we see this one who was able to stand and walk out of the tomb, then we see one who has an unrivaled and unparalleled authority over all things. And after His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples before He ascended bodily and visibly into heaven before, as Hebrews one says, he took a seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And if that same Jesus is living in ruling and reigning over all things now then that's going to shape and impact the way that we interact with one another in the way we interact with this world and every single corner of our life.

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If you want to read a really sustained and prolonged reflection upon this, there's a professor named Oliver O'Donovan, wrote a book called resurrection in moral order. And he shows how the risen Lord Jesus, this understanding of a risen Lord, who rules and reigns undergirds and informs everything about who we claim to be and what we claim to do. But it shows us that Jesus is Lord Overall, it's a second thing. The third is that the resurrection shows us where the story is heading.

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And shows us where the story is going. It's in Acts chapter one, after the 40 days with his disciple, that the risen Jesus ascended into heaven bodily visibly ascended into heaven, and the angels who are there, said, the disciples this same Jesus is going to come again, just as you saw him. And when he does return, he will judge the living in the dead, He will usher in the fullness of the new creation, all of those who belong to Him will also be raised just as he was, and will delight in the full beauty and wonder of the new creation that Scripture so often talks about.

18:07

The passage did Rhonda read just a little bit ago, and Isaiah 25 is one of the places that talks about that the Lord says, on my mountain, I'm going to gather all people and the veil that had hung over

them death itself, I've taken away, so there's no more tears, I've removed them and the people's responses, we have waited for God, and He is here. He's made good on this. Jesus resurrection. It's a pledge, it's a promise. It's even a prototype, if you will, of what will one day be true for all of those who belong to Him through faith. And that reality is not yet here fully. We know that.

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It's not yet here fully. So we live in that time, kind of between the time of like the first teaser trailer for a new film, and the day that it's actually released, there is an excitement, there's an anticipation that builds for these things, but the resurrection shows us what will be true for all of those who belong to Jesus. Those are at least three of the major implications of it. And because of that, the resurrection is not some ancillary doctrine in the Christian faith. It's not just one of the things that we believe that we kind of hold off on the side.

19:06

Back in May of 2020, when everybody was first trying to figure out what to do with themselves, and they were forced to isolate and stay indoors for long periods of time, there was a guy named Ty Valeo, Dante, he lives in Arizona, he set a Guinness world record by stacking 485 Jenga blocks on top of one single vertical Jenga block. He calculated it all out and engineered it. There's you can watch the time lapse video of him build this thing. 485 blocks on top of one vertical block. And when he's done, it stands totally without moving for nine minutes. And then he lets one of his little sons come in and just kick the whole thing over. It's kind of fun to watch that part of it.

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There's a passage in First Corinthians 15, that tells us that the resurrection is like that one vertical block, but there's nothing uncertain. There's nothing unstable about it. Nobody's going to come in and kick it over. In that passage. Paul says if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, then you're still in your sins. If Christ hasn't been raised from the dead

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then your faith is pointless. If Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, he said, our preaching is useless. If Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, He says, all bets are off. But if he has been,

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then everything changes.

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So the resurrection is not just one Bible story alongside all of the other ones. In fact, everything about Jesus is his teachings, His miracles, his compassionate love, all of those are ultimately irrelevant. If he remained dead, anybody can do that

remained dead, anybody can do that.

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That someone lived and died is not good news that someone died and then lived is good news. So with the resurrection stands or falls, the entirety of who we claim to be and what we're trying to do as a church, either Jesus has triumphed over sin and death, or he hasn't. And if it death still has the final say in his life, and it still has the final say, in yours.

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That's why the central claim of our faith is Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified is risen.

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Now that's Look, that's a bold claim. It has monumental implications. I'm not going to try to soft pedal it here for you at all. That's why the women responded the way that they did. And yet the resurrection demands a response.

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We have to respond to this somehow.

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And there's always been a range of responses to it always been a range of ways in which people do respond to it. Perhaps the case study for the one that gives us a little paradigm that shows the way it almost always is, comes at the end of Acts, chapter 17.

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Paul was in Athens at this point has been preaching and teaching to the philosophers there and beginning in verse 32, we see this.

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Now when they heard of resurrection of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, we will hear you again about this. So Paul went out from their midst, but some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Demetrius the silversmith, and a woman named Priscilla, and others with them.

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That right there shows the kind of range of reactions that are always present when we hear this news that this Jesus who died is alive forevermore, some mocked.

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Maybe that's where you are.

22:11

Maybe the resurrection is an idle tale. Maybe it just sounds too good to be true. This just sounds like the projection of wish fulfillment, or some bad first century fanfiction to write a better ending to a story. Death relinquishes its hold on no one, this can't be true. But if that's where you are, ask yourself why? Why are you so certain that this is impossible? Why are you so certain that this can't be true?

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Is it because you haven't seen physical tangible evidence right in front of you? That's all Thomas felt until he touched the pierced hands of his Lord.

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If you find yourself convinced that this is impossible, at least stop and ask yourself why.

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Some people, though, said, well, we want to hear a little bit more about this. Maybe they weren't quite ready to make this full jump. Yeah, they said this is this is something I haven't heard anything like this before. I'd like to hear a little bit more about this a questions. They didn't know what to make of this, because this was something entirely new to them. And if you read the Gospel accounts, you see that this is the first reaction that many of the disciples had. And Jesus doesn't condemn them for having those questions. He doesn't criticize them for that. Instead, he continues to demonstrate to them the truth of what had happened. So if you are intrigued if you're at that point of saying, oh, I want to hear a little bit more about this, I want to encourage you to keep exploring, go ahead and ask the Lord to show you the truth because the truth can stand up to scrutiny.

23:31

Maybe you're saying I want to hear a little bit more.

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Some, it says believed and followed after him.

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Now perhaps this is where you are, maybe you've even been there for years. Look, if that's the case, just take time this morning to rejoice in this good news that Jesus is alive. Or maybe this is a place you feel like you're getting to for the first time this morning.

23:52

Romans chapter 10, verses nine and 10. Say if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart, that God raised Him from the dead, then you will be saved with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth, one confesses, and is saved. This is the truth to which we cling. So if that's where you are, maybe that's where you feel like you're getting to know that Jesus has called you out of death and into life and that there is no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus Christ, and nothing can possibly separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And that's true because he is risen.

24:27

And if this is where you are, and this is what you know.

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And remember the command that was given to those at the tomb that morning,

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go and tell others

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go and tell them what you've seen, and what you've heard.

24:41

Because there's a response that we need to have.

24:47

One of my favorite Easter illustrations I'm just gonna close with this is a story about a shoemaker who lived in Paris. His name was John Lenoir. He lived in Paris at the end of the 18th century. And we have

his journal and one of his journal entries, one

25:00

He says nothing of importance happened today. That was the whole entry. nothing of importance happened today. He wrote that on July 14 1789. Unbeknownst to John, on the other side of the city, the Bastille had been stormed and the French Revolution had begun. It was an event that would change the course of Western history in front of remake the modern world, as we know it yet in the mind of an oblivious Parisian Shoemaker. nothing of importance happened today.

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Now, undoubtedly, he went back and reread that journal and revised his entry, I think for that day for most of the inhabitants at first Easter morning, and for many inhabitants of the world ever since they would say nothing of importance really happened today.

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But for those who awoke and found a vacated grave, they realized this changes everything.

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And for those ever since who have recognized the new reality that the resurrection brings this day changes. Everything in the day will come when all will see the events of this day have forever transformed the very fabric of the cosmos because the Lord lives. Death has lost its sting. And the grave has surrendered. Its finality Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, is risen.

26:14

Let's pray.

26:19

Great God, our heavenly Father, give us new joy as we hear of Jesus resurrection. Give us new courage as we bear witness to that truth. Give us new patience, as we wait to see him and to be made like he is. Thank you for the stunning news of this day.

26:39

Use it to transform our lives, our homes, our communities, and your world. We pray this in the name of our risen Lord Jesus, the King.

26:51

Amen.