

Rejoicing and Rejection - Jesus is Risen!- the message of the Resurrection

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, which you'll find at the end of Matthew's Gospel, end of Matthew chapter 27, page 835 in the Visitor's Bibles, if you have one. We're coming almost to the end of our studies in this section at the end of Matthew's Gospel on Matthew's passion, Matthew's preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ.

And we begin reading today at verse 62 in Matthew chapter 27.

The next day after the crucifixion, that is, after the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, Sir, we remember how that imposter said while he was still alive, after three days I will rise.

Therefore, order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people he has risen from the dead, and the last fraud will be worse than the first.

Pilate said to them, You have a guard of soldiers? Go, make it as secure as you can. So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

[1 : 19] Now, after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, Don't you be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

He's not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. And then go quickly and tell his disciples that he's risen from the dead.

And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I've told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and with great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings. And they came up to him and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. And then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid.

[2 : 35] Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me. While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place.

When they'd assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell the people his disciples came by night and stole them away while we were asleep.

And if this comes to the governor's ears, we'll satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed.

And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Amen. And may God bless us his word.

Well, do take up your Bibles, if you would, and let's turn together to the passage we read at the end of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 27, and into chapter 28, page 835, if you have a church Bible.

[3 : 36] And here, towards the end, Matthew is showing us both rejoicing and resistance in the message of the resurrection. Now, as we've seen, Jesus Christ was a divider of men all through his earthly ministry.

You see that plainly if you read through Matthew's Gospel. And of course, Jesus himself said it many times. I came not to bring peace, but a sword. To set sons against fathers, daughters against mothers.

Dividing, even within households. And Jesus divided people also in his death. We've seen that at the cross. As we've seen both mourners and mockers.

The scorn, the derision of the mockers that passes by. The scribes, the priests, the elders, even the robbers, the criminals, crucified with him, mocked him.

But we've also seen, likewise, at the same time, the sorrow and the devotion of his many followers, like the women who, in verse 61 here, are looking with great grief at his tomb.

[4 : 43] And of course, the message of Jesus Christ has divided men and women ever since. We saw last Sunday how Matthew shows us so clearly that in Jesus' death, the light that overcomes all darkness is shined into our human world.

Even into the dread darkness of death itself. But Jesus, as he himself says, tells us the terrible truth is that men have loved darkness rather than light.

And that's why so many, instead of rejoicing at the message of the risen Jesus, resist that message and reject it. And so those who proclaim the risen Jesus and his lordship, which demands that we bow the knee to him and to his authority, to his rule over every aspect of our lives, those who proclaim that message will be met both with rejoicing, but also with great resistance and rejection.

Ask Israel Folau, the Australian rugby star who was sacked last week simply for quoting the apostle of Jesus Christ and calling people to turn their back, to repent on ungodly lifestyles and to bow to the mastery of Jesus.

Well, friends, that has been so since the very beginning. But as Matthew ends his gospel here in chapter 28, his message to us as Christians today is absolutely clear.

[6 : 17] There is no future for a world that resists the message of Christ crucified and risen. Resistance is absolutely futile. It can't succeed in the end.

And resistance is fraudulent. It simply does not stand up to honest scrutiny. No, only those who meet the message of the risen Jesus with rejoicing, only they have a future.

And they will have a wonderful future in which joy overtakes fear, in which rejoicing overcomes resistance, in which death itself is swallowed up in life eternal.

Do not fear, says the angel to the women here in verse 5. Do you see? Don't fear, not you who seek Jesus, because he's risen as he said he would. And the gospel is sure and certain.

And so the future is sure and certain. Believe, believe, for you will see him. So let's look at Matthew's message a little more closely. Let's see what God wants us to understand from him this Easter morning.

[7 : 24] It's a message of great realism, but it's also a message of great hope. Bracketed between woeful futility and willful fraud, Matthew shows us his central message here.

And that is that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is, there is a wonderful future. But first, let's face up to the resistance to Christ's resurrection.

In verses 62 to 66, at the end of chapter 27, Matthew wants us to see that such resistance is utterly futile. And so he shows us here so clearly the woeful futility of a world that resists the risen Jesus and its truth.

Look here, he is saying to us, resistance is doomed. It cannot stand up to the power of Almighty God. Let's stop the resurrection.

That's the pathetic message of the priests and the Pharisees as they put their seal on the tomb and as they set their guard of soldiers around it. Matthew exposes for us the utter futility of that kind of resistance.

[8 : 36] And he shows us that it just comes from unbelievable enmity. It's driven by sheer blind prejudice. It's staggering, isn't it? When you think that last time in verse 54 of chapter 27, we saw the great climax of the passion story where we have pagan soldiers.

And when they saw, these pagans, how Jesus died and what happened so miraculously around his death, they, pagan soldiers, were filled with awe. And they said, truly, this was the Son of God.

And yet here in verse 62, these religious men were so unbelievably prejudiced. These religious leaders, they're not content just with killing Jesus, they're still resisting him even as a dead body in the tomb.

Staggering. And yet they're mounting a pathetic rear guard action, aren't they? Doomed to failure. Doomed to futility.

Because remember what we saw last time in verse 51. The temple curtain has already been torn down from heaven to earth. The temple is obsolete. And their religious importance in the world has been consigned to the dustbin of history as far as God's concerned.

[9 : 54] And verse 52, the tombs already have been opened in inescapable proof of the great earthquake in history that's changed this world forever through the death of Jesus Christ.

And yet they can say to themselves, we, we will stop all possible repercussions of this. As if, I mean, verse 64, as if the disciples had any thought of that.

Of coming to steal the body. We've seen the disciples have run away long ago. They're nowhere to be seen. I hardly like to be coming back now and mounting a commando raid, are they?

Or do the religious leaders actually fear something worse? That Jesus might actually rise from the dead? Notice the very unlikely alliance in verse 62.

The chief priests were from the group of Sadducees. That was the group, remember, that didn't believe in any resurrection at all, even at the last day. But the Pharisees here, quite different.

[11 : 03] They very much believed in resurrection. And that's why these two groups were at odds with each other, fighting nearly the whole time. And yet here they are, united in their sheer prejudice against Jesus Christ.

Remember how the psalmist talks in Psalm 2 about those strange alliances of kings and rulers and people against the Lord and his anointed. We know, sadly, don't we, that the United Nations is something of a misnomer, always disagreeing in the chamber.

But it is amazing in this world the uniting power of opposition to the truth about Jesus Christ. Why was there such unity here among these men?

Well, it was because none of them could dare contemplate the awful possibility that Jesus could be raised from the dead because they actually grasped what that would mean.

Look at verse 63. They remembered that he had said he would rise on the third day. In fact, if you read Matthew's gospel, the only time that Jesus spoke clearly to these religious leaders about the resurrection was back in chapter 12.

[12 : 20] And that was where he spoke to them about the sign of Jonah that would be given to them. What was his point there? It was that resurrection means judgment has come.

And Jesus said to them, plainly, the men of Nineveh will rise up on that day and condemn this generation, will condemn you. Why? Because they repented when God sent his prophet Jonah to call them to repentance.

And you haven't, even though one far greater than Jonah has come to you. You see, if Jesus was raised from the dead, they knew it would be judgment for them.

They knew what resurrection would mean for them. And they remembered what he'd said to them at the end of Matthew chapter 22 when they questioned him about being the son of David.

And Jesus quoted to them Psalm 110. That Psalm that talks about David prophesying the Messiah who would sit at God's right hand and what would he do? Put all his enemies under his feet.

[13 : 26] And they knew, didn't they, that they were Jesus' enemies. And they remembered at Jesus' trial how he had said, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

That is on the throne of judgment. They knew exactly what a truly risen Jesus Christ would mean. It would mean that he was the Messiah, the son of man, and the judge of this whole world.

And that was just too, too terrible a thing for them to even possibly contemplate. Might be something that's too hard for some of us here this morning to contemplate.

And that's why they refused to believe it. That's why they were determined that such a thing should never, ever become true. It's amazing, isn't it? How people can refuse to believe something because of what it would actually mean if it were true.

We human beings are amazing in our capacity to self-deceive, aren't we? And to collude with one another in self-deception. Things that we just won't allow to be considered to be true because we couldn't possibly bear the consequences if it was true.

[14 : 40] That's why, isn't it? That's why people have all sorts of medical symptoms getting worse, but they won't go to their doctor because they don't want that diagnosis. They don't want something to be true that they fear might be true.

And so it is with the resurrection of Jesus. David Hume, you know, the famous Scottish philosopher from the 18th century, the celebrated atheist, absolutely refused to believe anything about the miraculous, dismissed the resurrection of Jesus as utterly irrational, impossible.

And yet, you know, he's buried in Edinburgh and above his grave is an enormous monument, an enormous obelisk. And you know, it is said that he specifically commanded that in his will so that if he was wrong and there was a resurrection, he wouldn't be able to come up.

The celebrated intellectual philosopher, how utterly ridiculous to think that you could pit the strength of a piece of Edinburgh sandstone against the power of Almighty God.

But that's what these men were doing here, you see, with their seal and with their guard. There's huge irony in Pilate's words there in verse 65.

[15 : 59] Make it as secure as you can. Secure enough to resist the power of Almighty God, by the way, who alone can raise the dead. And so this pantomime unfolds and off they go to the tomb, the priests and the Pharisees solemnly sealing the stone with their wax seal, their stamp of religious authority.

And the soldiers, all their weapons, military guard of great force, all to guard a dead body in a tomb that couldn't possibly be opened anyway for this enormous stone in front of it.

And pit it against the mass ranks of opposition, mind you, verse 61. Look, a couple of weeping women. It's utterly farcical, isn't it?

It's ironic. And the whole purpose, look at verse 64, the whole purpose was to make it impossible for the disciples to steal the body and start a rumor based on that action.

But look down to verse 13 of chapter 28. That is what precisely became the message that they themselves actually put abroad. Tell the people, tell the people, the disciples did come at night and steal them away.

[17 : 11] The very thing they feared became their only possible argument against the truth of what had actually happened. It's laughable. And yet, their high security measures only served to make the evidence for the real truth even more certain.

It was absolutely impossible for there to be any sort of body-snatching effort. What is Matthew's message to us in telling us all this, friends?

He's telling us that the world, no matter all alliances against God and His Anointed One, the world cannot ever stop the power of God at work in His plan for the redemption of this world.

Not ever. Resistance to His resurrection power is futile. Yes, there will be unbelievable enmity.

Yes, there will be blind perversity because the message of the risen Jesus is terrifying to the world because it speaks of judgment by His unique throne.

[18 : 16] But you cannot stop the power of God with stones and with guards. Do you remember what happens later in Acts chapter 28 when the great persecution breaks out against the believers in Jerusalem and they're scattered?

What happens? Well, everywhere they go they proclaim the risen Jesus and people come to join the church and the church grows and mushrooms all over the world.

The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church since the very first day. You cannot stop the gospel of the risen Jesus in this world.

Not with military power, not with state power, not with any physical means at all. It's utterly futile to think so. And it will only serve His purpose more.

We had this morning in church a pastor from China who's about to go back there who was telling me about many, many of his friends who in recent days have been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel. But Matthew is telling us, friends, that cannot stop the power of Christ in this world.

[19 : 23] Even the wrath of man will praise Him, the psalmist says. What an encouragement to Matthew's first readers when they were being flung out of the synagogues and out of their towns for following Jesus in the first century.

What an encouragement today to many people all over the world who are being persecuted by the soldiers of hostile governments or by the terrorism of ISIL or those poor people who this morning were blown up in all those churches in Sri Lanka with a bomb on Easter Day.

Did you see that? Specifically to target Christians. Or those who in parts of Eastern Europe are persecuted by the religious authorities that call themselves the Orthodox Church but persecute real believers who love and follow Jesus.

And what an encouragement to all of us in our secular culture with its forces increasingly trying to erode Christian truth and Christian morality in our society ever more aggressively.

Be of good cheer, Matthew is telling us. The gospel of the risen Lord cannot, cannot be prevented that way or in any way. Resistance is futile and it can only ever serve the plan and the purpose of God.

[20 : 45] Let's pause and sing a hymn of great joy in that triumph of our risen Savior. The one who rose from the grave with a mighty triumph over all of his foes.

Do take up your Bible again and look now at verses 11 to 15 of Matthew chapter 28 the second bracket of our passage today because Matthew wants us to see not just the woeful futility but the woeful fraudulence of a world that resists the truth of the resurrection of Jesus.

What these verses tell us is that having failed to prevent the possibility of the resurrection the priests and elders now have to change tack. Silence the proclamation of the resurrection is what they say.

But Matthew exposes to us again just how dishonest how fraudulent that kind of resistance to the truth of God really is. It's just not rational.

It's just not scientific. It's just not honest to resist the gospel he is saying to us. And again it's motivated by a hatred for the truth.

[22 : 01] It's motivated by blind prejudice. It's motivated by a clear perversion of truth and evidence. These men are faced aren't they with blinding proof with absolutely clear evidence but in their wickedness they want to suppress it.

Instead they want to take refuge in this preposterous story about body snatching. the very thing that their own provisions had absolutely made impossible. They had called Jesus an imposter in verse 63 and they'd said that the message about the resurrection would be a worse fraud than the first his claim to be the Messiah.

And that's what they say in verse 64 but in fact it's their last fraud that is worse even than their crime of putting Jesus to death.

Because they resist him still even when they're faced with undeniable truth that's repeated to them by these terrified soldiers. The soldiers told them everything.

So chapter 28 verse 11 they heard it from first hand witnesses. Witnesses with absolutely no reason to lie because their lives were on the line. They knew the penalty.

[23 : 16] but still they didn't repent not even then. No admission no saying oh we were wrong we were wrong we have crucified the Christ our own Messiah.

No contrition no crying out to God oh forgive us for this terrible sin. They're just hardened unbelief. And it's expressed in this willful fraudulence to fool themselves and worse look at verse 13 to fool all the people tell the people this story they said this unbelievable tale about grave robbery.

Quite obviously preposterous. That's why they have to give the soldiers such a big bung of cash in verse 12 a sufficient sum. Well it would have to be wouldn't it? Just imagine trying to get this story across.

Okay so let's get this story clear. You squad of toughened soldiers were overpowered yes by an unarmed bunch of theology students and most of them were women.

Hmm. Oh well we were asleep. Come off it. You know the penalty for falling asleep on duty. All of you asleep? Pull the other one.

[24 : 31] And anyway if you were asleep how do you know what happened? How can you tell us? I mean the whole thing is just utterly absurd. But it's amazing isn't what people will believe to avoid the truth.

It's a well established fact. The psychologists call it confirmation bias. We believe what we want to believe. And often that is a willful fraud and self deception.

And worse here verse 13 willful deception of others also. Do you see tell the people these lies. First lest the disciples get to them and tell them the truth. Even the resurrection and the plain evidence that is forced on them.

It hadn't changed them at all. Remember what Jesus has said of these men back in Matthew 23? Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to enter in. They denied both themselves but far worse. They denied others the truth of eternity because they so loved this world and its treasures and its religions.

[25 : 46] They would not let go of the power and influence and reputation that they had in society. Which is what you simply must do if you were to embrace the truth about the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Because if it is true then he alone is both Lord and judge of all things and he calls everyone to bow to him, to obey him, to follow him, to be transformed by him for a whole new world.

Everything about your life must change if this is really true. And that's why today just as on that first day so many people still resist, push back on the truth of the gospel of the risen Jesus Christ.

A real, genuine, physical resurrection. Because that would bring an earthquake to our life that we simply don't want and can't tolerate.

A real Jesus, an alive Jesus, a risen Jesus who must be obeyed, whose power and authority can't possibly be thwarted. Oh no, no, no, we can't have that.

[26 : 53] So the soldiers get their cash and the religious establishment keeps its kudos. And they're united in resisting the gospel of Christ.

It's a terrible indictment, isn't it? But friends, all through Christian history, it's often been the case. Certainly it still is today. Religious establishment in a quid pro quo relationship with the secular world.

Happy to give anodyne platitudes to order in order to keep some kudos, to keep the recognition of society. A society, of course, that's happy to hear stories about a dead Jesus, a silenced Jesus, nothing to rock the boat, nothing to threaten anyone, nice wistful thoughts about what Jesus might say or what Jesus might do and so on.

But utterly resistant to a living Jesus Christ, the risen Lord of glory, who speaks from heaven, who commands with all authority on this earth to shake the earth, to demand a unique response of worship to him alone, and obedience to his word alone in every aspect of our lives.

We won't have that. Matthew says, friends, it's been like that from the very beginning. The sons of those who murdered the prophet and murdered the Lord Jesus, they're still walking the earth and wearing ecclesiastical robes today, and they're still refusing the plain truth of the gospel and replacing it with a mere memory, an impotent Jesus, a powerless Jesus, a Jesus with no authority to rule his church, let alone the world.

[28 : 36] But therefore, of course, a Jesus who equally has no power to save from death and from the grave. But Matthew says, fear not.

Whether that resistance comes in the form of secularism or from the corridors of theological radicalism and revisionism inside the church, it's all willful fraud.

It's all sheer dishonesty. And it's based on unbelievable enmity, blind prejudice, and refusal of plain evidence, so plain that the blind could see.

Fear not, says Matthew, the gospel can't be silenced that way either. There'll always be resistance to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, there will.

Because Jesus said, you cannot serve God and mammon, this world's gain. And friends, this world's gain grips people like a vice, even religious people, perhaps especially them.

[29 : 42] Sometimes it's riches, sometimes it's prosperity or power or recognition or popularity. But friends, we know the pull of these things is very, very strong. And that's why many choose to reject God and the gospel, even though there is all this evidence.

But we need to see that for what it is. It is self-deception. It is willful fraud, suppressing the truth. And it is woefully futile.

It has no future. I hope you can see that's what Matthew is telling us this Easter Sunday morning. And even more importantly, he's telling us to see the alternative way, the way of victory that is unquestionably with those who do not suppress the truth, who don't resist it but who rejoice in the message of the resurrection.

That's the heart of Matthew's message in verses 1 to 10. We'll look at it in a moment. But before we do, let's sing once again of the true message of transforming joy on that Easter morning.

See what a morning gloriously bright with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem. Well, one last time to open your Bibles with me. And this time, let's look at verses 1 to 10 of chapter 28, where Matthew shows us the wonderful future for those who don't resist but who rejoice in the message of the risen Lord Jesus.

[31 : 05] See the power of the resurrection of Jesus is what he's seeing. See what real Christian belief, what real faith actually is. And it is not a leap into the dark, but it is a recognition of the blinding light of truth.

In total contrast to the rejection of the message based on enmity, on prejudice, here is real faith. Here is rejoicing based on undeniable evidence, on blinding proof.

Proof which is seen, Mark, you both by the soldiers and by the women, and reported by both of these to others, and yet to the one, it's the smell of death, and it's resisted absolutely.

Or to the other, it is truly the fragrance of life eternal. It's rejoiced in with great joy. Jesus had spoken, hadn't he, all the way through his ministry of a new world, the world to come.

And verse 1 here, in chapter 28, speaks not just of the dawn of a new week, but the dawn of a new world. Because heaven at last has broken into earth to shake it, to change it forever.

[32 : 21] And the angel who came right at the very beginning, remember, to herald the birth of the Savior, he now appears to herald his great triumph. Isn't it wonderful to see the effortless sweeping aside of all the enemies of the resurrection?

Verse 2, the stone, with all its pompous seal, swept away, rolled away. And the soldiers, verse 4, like dead men. And the one who sits in heaven laughs.

The Lord has them in derision, says Psalm 2. And surely all heaven is laughing, clapping perhaps. But when you love verse 2, the stone's rolled away and the angel sits on it.

That stone which has been sealed with all the solemn authority of the scribes and the Pharisees, touch not this stone, any man. But God's angel just shoves it aside and plonks his backside on it.

That's what God thinks of your stone and your resistance. Do you think this stone has power and your decree has power against the power of God and the power of Christ's mighty resurrection?

[33 : 31] church? I wonder if on the last day David Hume's obelisk will be swept aside just like that and he'll awake and find an angel sitting his backside on it. I hope so.

And certainly on that day, friends, there will be total exposure. Total exposure to the whole world of the flimsiness, the foolishness of every single apparently weighted offense that man has set up against the possibility of the truth of the risen Jesus.

All their PhD theses, all their books, all their theories, all their clever cynical speeches and articles and TV programs and so on. And on that day, they too will be likewise paralyzed with fear.

They will be like dead men. Because the resurrection is a fearful thing for every enemy of the king of glory. Because the king set on high will rule the nations.

He'll break in pieces his enemies. That's what Jesus said. They quoted Psalms to him. Psalm 110, Psalm 2. Go and read them, friends. Jesus said, those are speaking about me.

[34 : 41] He will rule this world in the midst of his enemies. So no wonder the world hides from that truth. It can't be true. We can't have that.

It mustn't be true. We won't allow it to be true. But it is true. And it's that truth that strikes fear into the heart of all who are at odds with God.

But, and this is the wonderful thing, look at verse 5. No fear, no fear for those who seek Jesus. Only a promise.

Don't you fear. And notice here the focus all on the evidence. The blinding proof. In total contrast to the prejudice, to the denial of the others. Verse 6.

He is risen. As he said, Jesus' words are proved true. Come and see where he lay. See it for yourself with your own eyes. There are eyewitnesses of Jesus' promises and they are ear witnesses of all that came to pass.

[35 : 44] See Matthew and all the gospel writers, they are utterly clear. They are utterly transparent. As is Paul when he writes to the churches. There were many, hundreds of real witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

Go and ask them yourself. They can tell you. Faith is not a leap into the dark. It's a response to the clear, undeniable evidence of honest people.

Clear proof of an utterly miraculous resurrection from the dead. Which can only be denied if you prejudice it as an impossible thing.

Or because you just can't tolerate it because the implications are too frightening for you to contemplate. So you have to hide from it. Pretend it away. But there are mighty implications.

That's why verse 7, you see, the resurrection must become a message. Go quickly and tell. From day one, it's a message. A message that divides the world.

[36 : 48] The soldiers go and tell. Verse 11. And there's this erection of fear. And it leads to a denial of the truth. Makes money for them. But it brings darkness to their souls.

But the women, verse 8, they go and tell. And their fear turns to great joy as it leads to a declaration of truth. And it becomes a message for the whole world.

To bring light in the darkness forever. For all peoples. Do you see? Do you see where they're told to go in verse 7? You've got to go to Galilee. Galilee of the Gentile nations is what it's called in chapter 4 of Matthew's gospel.

Right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He quotes from Isaiah the prophet. In Galilee of the Gentile nations, the people walking in darkness will see a great light. For those dwelling in the shadow of death.

For them, for the Gentile nations, all of them, a light has dawned. And so now, do you see, it's from Galilee. It's from Galilee of the Gentile nations. It's from Galilee.

[37 : 51] It's from Galilee. The resurrection life is going to spread out to all the nations of this world. Even distant Europe and this island. With the promise of a future.

With the light of life everlasting. With death and darkness gone forever through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that's a message that demands rejoicing, not resistance.

And that's what faith really is. It's just receiving the evidence about Jesus and rejoicing in the message that it brings. That's what the women did. They believed.

And that's why they were filled with joy and ran to tell others. Because that news just has to be shared, doesn't it? And as they did, look at verse 9. Behold, Jesus met them.

And they know him beyond all doubt to be the one who is to be worshipped. They can only worship the God of heaven, the Lord of Israel.

[38 : 51] But they know that this is he. As they see him risen before their eyes. Friends, the only future for this world, the only future for all people, for you and me, is in rejoicing, in receiving the message of the resurrection of Jesus.

And if you're a Christian believer this morning, Matthew is saying to you, don't fear, not you, who seek Jesus. Be realistic. Yes, some will oppose this message. But rejoice.

And verse 10, you see, is as true today as it was then in this sense. It's because it's when we go and tell the good news of the risen Savior that people will have their eyes opened.

And their lives will be turned from fear to joy. As rejoicing overcomes resistance. And as they find in the risen Jesus light and life eternal.

The gospel of the risen Jesus Christ is the power of God, unstoppable, for the salvation of all who believe.

[39 : 57] And so if you don't yet know the Lord Jesus Christ, there's a promise here for you also. If you'll put away your prejudice and your enmity. And if you will seek Jesus Christ who was crucified, if you'll believe the evidence, and if you'll trust in the gospel of his risen power, he will reveal himself to you also.

He will, always. He won't ever reveal himself to those who only seek satisfaction in their own pride and their own hubris.

But he will always reveal himself to those who seek the satisfaction of their own poverty and their hunger in him and in him alone. Seek him that way and he will fill your life with joy.

Joy that banishes all fear. Rejoicing that overcomes all resistance. And he will carry you with him into that glorious future and a new world of life everlasting.

Friends, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that's what Matthew wants us to hear this Easter day. Amen. Let's pray together. Lord, will you comfort our brothers and sisters all over the world who this day face the wrath of man for the sake of our Lord Jesus.

[41 : 30] And may they know that all such resistance to your gospel is futile, that even the wrath of man will praise you. And may we, Lord, and all your children also rejoice in the wonderful future that is ours through his risen glory.

So open our hearts, we ask, this Easter day, in Jesus' name. Amen.