

What is the best news that you have ever heard? Maybe it's the news of a child being born. Maybe it's the news that you got the job you were hoping for. What's the best news that you have ever heard? It's been well said that the Christian message is news about something that has happened.¹ It's good news because it has relevance for your life and mine. On Easter Sunday morning the angel announced the best news that anyone has ever heard: "He is not here; he has risen" (Matthew 28:6).

Christ is Risen!

- I. Trust in his power.
- II. Rejoice in his love.

First, Christ is risen! Trust in his power. When the women went to the tomb that first Easter Sunday morning, they were probably feeling pretty powerless. Our passage begins, "**After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb**" (Matthew 28:1). Mark and Luke tell us that they went to anoint Jesus' body (Mark 16:1). Matthew tells us another reason that they went. They went "**to look at the tomb**" (Matthew 28:1). That reminds me that sometimes we might go to a cemetery just to see the grave of a loved one. And we might sometimes feel rather powerless.

But on that Easter Sunday morning God showed his great power. There was an earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away. His appearance was like lightning. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

But as powerful as those things were, those things were not the powerful thing that was done that day. Why did the angel roll the stone away? The angel did not roll the stone away to let Jesus out. Jesus became alive in the tomb and left the tomb without opening the door. He can do that. Remember when he appeared to his disciples while they were hiding behind locked doors (John 20:19). The angel rolled the stone away not to let Jesus out, but to show that the tomb was already empty.

The most powerful thing that happened that day was not the earthquake. It was not the angel rolling the stone away. The most powerful thing that happened that day was that Jesus rose from the dead. The angel said to the women, "**Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen**" (Matt 28:5-6). In short, simple sentences, the angel tells them facts of eternal significance: "**He is not here; he has risen**" (Matt 28:6).

Jesus was dead and he became alive again. This shows us that he has power over death. And Christ's power over death shows us that he has the power to keep his promises. "**He is not here; he has risen, just as he said**" (Matt 28:6). Jesus had said that he would rise from the dead. For example, back in Matthew chapter 17 Jesus said, "**The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life**" (Matthew 17:22-23). Jesus repeated that promise several times. And on Easter Sunday morning he kept that promise and rose from the dead. The empty tomb proves that Christ has the power to keep his promises.

Christ has made some spectacular promises to you. Christ has promised to return and raise you and all believers from the dead in glory. The empty tomb is proof that Christ has the power to keep his promises. We might feel powerless in the face of death, but death is powerless in the face of Jesus.

¹ For example, Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

If Christ has power over death, that means he has power over everything else too. COVID-19 has caused a lot of hurt in the lives of a lot of people. A lot of people are suffering from it. But we have a living Savior who has promised to be with us always. The angel told the women, **“God quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him’” (Matt 28:7)**. When the disciples met Jesus in Galilee, Jesus gave them the great commission and then he gave this promise: **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)**. Whatever challenges we face, we don’t face them alone. We face them with a living Savior by our side. He is going to bring us through difficult days and he is going to be with us every step of the way.

Christ is risen, trust in his power. And, secondly, rejoice in his love. All this was going on at the empty tomb. But some distance away there was a group of people who feeling crushed by sadness: the disciples. And God wanted this message to get to them. And so the women, the first recipients of this good news, became the first human messengers of this good news.

“So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples” (Matt 28:8). Can you imagine the jolt of adrenaline they must have been feeling? They *ran* to tell the disciples. But before they told the disciples Jesus had one more gift for them. They would see Jesus himself: **“Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said” (Matthew 28:9)**. Here we have an ordinary greeting from someone who had just done something extraordinary.

“They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him” (Matthew 28:9). Jesus is the second person of the Trinity. He is true God and he is worthy of worship as true God. This Easter Sunday, let’s worship Jesus thankful for his love.

What Jesus says next shows his great love. **“Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:10)**. Did you notice what Jesus called his disciples. He called them his “brothers.” And that shows his love because in the Garden of Gethsemane, his disciples abandoned him. And in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter had denied him. But here Jesus calls them “brothers.”

We can think of times when we have been like the disciples, but do you remember what the angel called Jesus back at the empty tomb? The angel said, **“I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified” (Matt 28:5)**. Jesus loved us so much that he was crucified to take away your sins and my sins.

In the Book of Hebrews it says, **“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters” (Hebrews 2:11)**. Through faith in Jesus we are Jesus’ brothers and sisters. And Jesus will share his heavenly inheritance with us, his brothers and sisters.

On this Easter Sunday let’s trust in Christ’s power. He has power over death and over everything else and he’s promised to be with us always. Let’s trust in his power. And let’s rejoice in his love. He calls us his brothers and sisters and he will share with us his heavenly inheritance. Christ is risen! Trust in his power. Rejoice in his love. Amen.