

A Special Easter Sunday Message from Pastor Marv

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] The Lord is risen! And the Craig family music helps things feel a little bit normal at least, even though this is an extraordinary time that we are sharing together. We are grateful for it. Perhaps next year I'll be able to hear you respond as a gathered congregation when I say, the Lord is risen! And you'll be able to respond with the Lord is risen indeed. So thanks to all of you for connecting with us, which has to be a first-of-a-kind Easter Sunday that I actually prefer to call Resurrection Sunday. And this electronic get-together that we are enjoying is the brainchild of Terry Fisher and Nathan Rambeck. And if it were not for their technical expertise, we would not be able to do this. So we are grateful to these gentlemen for providing us with this opportunity and getting the painstaking technology together that made it happen. As we begin with prayer this morning, we want to keep in mind several issues that we're going to bring before the Lord. And these are kind of national considerations that everybody is thinking about in the midst of this crisis. But first and foremost is our thanksgiving that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead to give us life eternal and its benefits. And by way of petitions, we want to address the Lord on behalf of our president and his advisors who comprise the new task force that will be exploring our nation's need to return to normal. I cannot imagine what a daunting task this must be. Simply, because there are so many things that they have to take into consideration and so many different demands being made upon government and its abilities at this time that these are going to need real divine guidance and there's only one one one person that can provide that. And I also would like to address the Lord on behalf of this crisis that it might serve our nation as a wake-up call to our own vulnerability and for a renewed opportunity for the gospel. You have often heard it said that man's extremities are God's opportunities. Well, man certainly is facing a group of extremities now, the likes of which we have not for our lifetime. And that it may be a wake-up call to all believers to alertness for conveying the gospel to others. Because there are a lot of hurting people out there that are undergoing pain for all different kinds of reasons, but ultimately much of it is related to the coronavirus that we are now facing. And there needs to be an increased appreciation of togetherness for the hugs and the hugs and the handshakes that we have to take for granted. And it's one of those built-in things to life that you do automatically, I guess, take for granted. But I sure am looking forward to the time when the Grace family can be together once again and we can see your smiling faces. So would you join with me in prayer, please? And then we'll go to Matthew's gospel chapter 28.

Father, Father, Father, first of all, we want to thank you for the reason for our gathering here and for believers gathering all across the world to celebrate that most incredible event that has ever taken place in the history of humanity.

And how grateful we are for the truth that resounds from that empty tomb even to this day. And we simply pray that this will provide believers with that need for cohesiveness that draws us all together.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from every kind of nation and background and color and tradition and ethnicity and all that it involves.

Yet in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have this one commonality that unites us together, and we are so grateful for it. And we recognize that there is absolutely nothing else that could do this.

[4 : 42] So we are grateful for the reality that he is not here. He is risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

How grateful we are for those words. We ask that as these people consider the possibility and the time frame for the United States of America, in particular, returning to some semblance of normality, we simply ask that you will give them the insight and the wisdom that is necessary to be able to take

into consideration all of the factors that are involved, most of which most of us cannot even imagine. So we pray for the portion of your wisdom to be granted to them. And we ask that as they contemplate the return of our nation to normality, that they will understand that you are indeed behind it all.

And we pray for believers that we may be alert and take advantage of the opportunities that are out there because people have a great deal of anxiety and many questions as regarding what's happening.

And we pray for the opportunity that we may have the wisdom and the ability to do that.

[6 : 04] And thank you for the sheer opportunity that we have enjoyed in the past of simply being together and being able to shake one another's hands and extend a hug of appreciation one to another, something that will not be likely to take for granted when that privilege is returned to us.

So now for the going forth of your word, we pray that you will use it to stimulate, inspire, encourage, convict, whatever the need is, as you know it to exist in the hearts and minds of each one who is listening.

We thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen. Reading from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 28, and I was exercised over which of the four gospels to read from.

Finally settled on Matthew after reading all of them a number of times, and I can't really tell you why exactly I settled on this, except it is it is of all of the synoptics.

It is the most lengthy and it has information like the others. It contains a few nuances that the others do not. And of course, that's that's the typical of the synoptic gospels.

[7 : 16] They all portray the life of Jesus Christ, but each one from a little bit different perspective. So follow along, if you would, please, whatever translation you have.

Matthew's gospel, chapter 28. Now, after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

And his appearance was like lightning and his garment as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

And the angel answered and said to the women, do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

[8 : 16] He is not here, for he has risen just as he said. Come, see the place where he was lying and go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

And behold, he is going before you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to report it to his disciples.

And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and take word to my brethren to leave for Galilee. And there they shall see me.

Now, while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priest all that had happened. And when they had assembled with the elders and counseled together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, you are to say his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

[9 : 41] And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble. And they took the money and did as they had been instructed.

And this story was widely spread among the Jews. And it is to this day. What is it?

As we begin some thoughts regarding this passage, let me ask you, what is it? What is what's interesting? What is it?

The answer is obvious. and it could not be more so. That one thing is life. Life itself, our mere existence of living functioning human beings. Absolutely nothing tops our own existence as our being alive. It is so valuable that our Lord said of it, what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? The value of it or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? It is life, pure and simple, that we all go to all lengths to preserve. It is life that we all celebrate at its beginning. How people gather around the newborn baby and they are absolutely stunned at another miracle that has taken place because another human being has entered the world. It's a great cause for celebration and it is life that we all mourn at its ending. It is life we protect and cherish and it is life

that we too often take for granted. Life and its drive for continued existence is common to all forms of life from the human to the lowliest microscopic form of life even like the coronavirus. It too strives to maintain its existence and in doing so it has taken 20,000

American lives in order to continue its being and today this invisible enemy has forced over 100,000 humans to give up their lives so it could perpetuate its life. Now I have a question for you.

[12:53] Where did this virus come from? How did it originate? The puzzling thing about viruses and germs and thorns and thistles is that they did not appear to be in the picture at all in accordance with Genesis chapter 1 when God had finished creating the heavens and the earth and all that is in it because at the end of the chapter our Lord said it was very good. Well what happened to the very good? We cannot categorize life-taking viruses as being part of very good. We know that the adversary comes into the picture.

We know that he was originally created as Lucifer. He was given a volition, the ability to comply with God or the ability to rebel against God and we know that he chose to rebel and go his own way and as a result he recruited one-third of the angels God had created to join his cause and so far as we know they remain active today and they are referred to as demons. Not nearly as active now as they were particularly during the time of our Lord when he was here on earth for those three years. But does Satan have creative power? We know that he is a destroyer and he disrupts much that God has created and that seems to be his game plan.

But do we have any indication at all that he is able to create life or is that something that is reserved strictly for the creator? God obviously grants Satan latitude even as he did with Job in chapter 1 because there we are described we see described in chapter 1 of Job where a messenger arrived to tell Job and his wife the news that fire fell from heaven and we would surmise that that was probably a lightning strike and it fell from heaven and destroyed some and a great wind that we probably would describe as a tornado that collapsed the house that Job's children were occupying and they were killed.

Now it's apparent that God obviously delegated the ability to Satan to bring about those things because even as he gave Satan power over Job to take from him anything that Satan wished to take from him he would not allow him to take his life.

So obviously God gave Satan the ability to create lightning to use it to destroy a tornado to use it to destroy.

[16:14] Human life is a struggle. Cosmic contest between good and evil is underway. And the resolution of that conflict is what this thing called life is all about.

It will culminate in the kingdom of God established on earth and it will then be interrupted after the thousand year reign of Christ in Revelation chapter 20 with the release of Satan from the pit that he was forced to occupy for a thousand years and then be loosed for the one great grand final rebellion and that will be Satan and all he has created or recruited will be summarily dispatched and the eternal state of Revelation 21 and 22 will commence without end and all believers will share in it throughout eternity.

And right now as we speak, we remain in process as this cosmic conflict continues.

We are all engaged in a story that is unfolding. We already have part of it in the history that's been provided in Scripture. And what is now unfolding is simply the present aspect of that with more to come, but there will be a culmination.

What has become the basis for resolving the conflict started 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ died to purchase back that which was given up by the first man, Adam.

[18:01] He forfeited his God-given dominion over earth and Satan became the new master. This is why he is referred to as the prince of this world.

Three different times in John's Gospel, Satan has become the new master. He is the merchant of deception, division, disease, and death.

His name in Revelation is called Apollyon, which literally means the destroyer. The resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are celebrating today has, of course, a companion truth, and it is the substitutionary death of Christ for sin that occurred three days before that resurrection.

These two, the cross and the empty tomb, constitute God's one-two knockout punch against sin and death.

These two grandest of all historical events changed absolutely everything. They have become, rightly so, the focal point of all human existence.

[19 : 29] And those who do not know that or believe that, simply do not understand what took place, why it did, who orchestrated it all, and where it is going.

The Bible and the Bible alone spells it all out in great detail, and it alone has the corner on the truths it describes.

From no other source does this information come. So, it does indeed make the Bible not only a big deal, but the biggest deal all alone.

And if you ignore it, you do so to your own detriment. It is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that changed everything.

It brought a new perspective. It brought a new enlightenment regarding life and afterlife. It brought new hope.

[20 : 32] It brought new confidence. It brought a new peace. It brought a new appreciation for life. Human life is so valuable that none ever began will ever end.

Human life, simply because it is the image and likeness of God, will endure in perpetuity somewhere.

Think of that. Human life is so valuable, none that ever began will ever end.

Human life, simply because it is the image and likeness of God, will endure in perpetuity somewhere.

We all of us live injured lives, in injured bodies, that dwell all over the face, of an injured world.

[21 : 41] Despite its fallenness, life and its realities, has so much to offer, in enjoyment, and purpose, and meaning.

I was saddened, and yet, somewhat amused, as I read a sticker that was plastered on the side, of buses, in London, England, traveling all over the countryside.

It was quite remarkable. Quite remarkable that, the English authorities, or bus company, was even willing to put this on their bus. But they did.

And for all I know, it's probably still, plastered on the side of those buses. You can see pictures of it online. And the saying was, there's probably no God.

Now stop worrying, and enjoy your life. How clever. There's probably.

[22 : 52] And I was intrigued by that statement. There's probably. You'll notice, they didn't say, there's definitely no God. But they said, they said, there's probably no God.

And the Christian, of course, counters with advice of our own. And to the atheist, we would advise that there definitely is a God when we as humans, endowed with volition, have gravely offended.

And that is cause for worrying, and worrying a great deal. So rather than stop your worrying, you ought to start worrying, because there is a God.

Actually, however, rather than worrying, you can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for your sin. And he did so because he loved you so much, despite your disregard for him.

And if you do this, you will enter into the sphere of forgiveness that provides for the peace of God to be your portion.

[24 : 10] And then, you have the only legitimate cause to stop worrying and enjoy your life. Short of that, my dear atheist friend, you have every reason to worry.

Someone has put it this way. So I believe there is a God, and I believe what the Bible says about him, and I believe what Jesus Christ did in order to bring us to God.

And if it should all turn out that I was wrong, and there is no God, and there is no hereafter, and there is no heaven, and there is no hell, what have I lost?

But if there is, and you choose to ignore him, and the revelation he has given, and the sacrifice his son has made for your sins, what are you out?

What have you lost? You've lost everything. The subsequent death of Christ for sinners, and that divine love that provided it, God's one-two knockout punch for sin, and death, and the grave.

[25 : 31] And we are so glad that he is risen. My original plan was to expound somewhat on Matthew's Gospel, chapter 28, but it is apparent that that's going to have to be reserved, perhaps, for our next session and get-together.

We don't know how long this kind of an arrangement is going to continue, so, unfortunately, it might be something that we're going to have to get used to, so we'll just have to play it by ear and see exactly how long we're going to be confined to this kind of an arrangement.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has a companion truth, and it, of course, is the substitutionary death of Christ for sin. These two, the cross and the empty tomb, constitute God's one-two

knockout punch against sin and death.

And the two grandest of all historical events, these two, changed absolutely everything. They have become, rightly so, the focal point of all human existence, and those who do not know that or believe that simply do not understand what took place, why it did, and who orchestrated it all. The Bible spells it all out in great detail, and it alone has the corner on the truth that it describes. From no other source does this information come, and it does not only make the Bible a big deal, it makes it the biggest deal alone.

[27 : 32] And you can ignore it if you choose, but please be warned that you ignore it to your own peril. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything.

It brought a new perspective. It brought a new enlightenment regarding life and the afterlife. It brought a new hope and a new confidence. It brought a new peace.

It brought a new appreciation for life. Human life is so valuable, none that ever began will ever end. Human life, simply because it is the image and likeness of God, will endure in perpetuity somewhere.

Where will yours be? We all live injured lives in injured bodies that dwell all over the face of an injured world.

[28 : 35] and despite its fallenness, life and its realities, still has so much to offer in enjoyment, purpose and meaning. And when God is really at the center of it, it places an enormous emphasis and value upon that.

someone on the atheistic side was heard to say, there's probably no God.

Now stop worrying and enjoy your life. Think of that. There's probably no God.

Stop worrying and enjoy your life. And the Christian counters with advice of our own and to the atheist we would advise, there definitely is a God whom we as humans are endowed with volition and have grievously offended.

That is a cause for worrying and worrying a great deal. But rather than worrying, you can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ who died for your sin and he did so because he loved you dearly despite your disregard for him.

[29 : 57] And if you do this, you will enter into the sphere of forgiveness that provides for the peace of God to be your portion. Then, and only then, you will have a legitimate cause to stop worrying and enjoy your life.

But short of that, our atheist friends have every reason to worry. The substitutionary death of Christ for sinners and his subsequent resurrection, that is the divine duo addressing the death and resurrection.

That's God's one, two, knockout punch for sin and death over the grave. And this marvelous passage that we have here in Matthew's gospel, we will undertake in our next get-together.

And as I've said, I have no idea how long this is going to last or when we will be able to resume our congregating again like we are so accustomed to over the last 50 years.

And by the way, I don't know if you are aware of it or not, but Grace Bible Church is coming upon our 50th anniversary very shortly. And we'll have cause for celebrating and we may have to celebrate in absentia.

[31 : 23] I don't know. But at any rate, here, there, or in the air, we'll be celebrating and I'd like you to keep that in mind. And as we gather together next week, I just want to open up this marvelous passage in Matthew chapter 28 that deals with the resurrection of Christ and some of the details that are involved therein.

I think you will find absolutely fascinating, comforting, reassuring, enlightening, and all the rest that goes with it as the Word of God can only provide it. Someone asked me by telephone the other day, what about giving to the church and about the only cost that is reduced for the church budget is the cost of utilities simply because we're not utilizing them very much.

So an unoccupied building uses less of everything. But we would remind you that our missionary commitments continue as their needs are really unchanged.

And since our missions consists of about 30% of our budget, it is important that we be able to provide them with the funds that we've committed ourselves to so that they will have use of the money that they are anticipating.

We still have full use of the postal service, so feel free to mail any gift you may wish to do so to the church address and your gift will be processed as before.

[32 : 49] And I do not have other information to give you beyond that, but as things come to your attention, you can advise me online or by telephone. And I want you to know that we are available and will continue to be so.

I really do miss being there and I miss seeing your smiling faces sitting there in the congregation and the great times that we have been accustomed to enjoying. Lo, these last 50 years, if you can believe that.

But in God's good time, perhaps we will be able to meet again in a familiar setting, enjoy the fellowship one another and what comes to us from God's word.

So for right now, this is Pastor Wiseman saying thank you so much for being part of our audience today. Hope you'll be able to join us next week as we provide an exposition of Matthew's chapter 28.

I think you will find it enlightening and very encouraging. Pray with me if you would, please.

Gracious Father, it is to you and you will learn that we appeal now for the wisdom that we know we lack and all wisdom resides in you.

[33 : 55] So we simply ask that we may tap into what you are willing to provide for us. We want to make ourselves available and disposable in any way, shape, or form that you see fit.

We recognize that in times that we are suffering right now with the virus that is plaguing us, with the lives that have been lost through it, we recognize that it too comes from the prince of evil who is the minister of death as opposed to your being the minister of life and we look to you for more wisdom and understanding regarding that.

Right now, we want to thank you and rejoice over the life we have and in particular for the Christ that you have given to provide us with a new meaning and appreciation for what would otherwise be just an ordinary life but a life with Jesus Christ at the center of it has nothing ordinary about it and we are so grateful for the peace, comfort, and assurance that is imparted to us simply because we put our faith and trust in this incredible Savior, our Lord Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen.