

## Matt 28.1-20 – Easter Sunday 2017

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Main Point – Jesus has risen, so we worship him and tell others about him.

**Sally Graham** was an alcoholic, a heroin & cocaine *user and dealer*, who'd spent time in prison.-----[*Eternity*,April'10]

One night in *desperation*, she told God (*if there was one*), he had to do something, or else she would *kill* her husband.(**SLIDE**)

The next morning, hoping to score heroin to murder her abusive husband with a deliberate *overdose*, Sally bumped into a former colleague who was a 'pretty harsh junkie'.

He was now a *Christian*, and he urged her to come to church.-----

Sally says, right at *that moment* I knew God was real.

He had answered my prayer in a way that I understood.-----

She went home and confessed to her husband Max.-----

The following Sunday she *went to church*. A week later she was baptized.

Max went with her and was baptized after that.

Their lifestyle was entrenched and things were hard to change, but they shifted into a *new gear*, and a process of gradual transformation began.

She says, 'I started to read the Bible and *believe* that God had things to say about my own life.'-----

Sally has been totally changed, and became a worker with Prison Fellowship.-----

What is my point?-----

My point is, if you truly believe something, it will lead to change; you will act on it.----

Sally came to truly believe that God was real, and she *acted on* it.

The question is, If Jesus is risen, *so what?*(**SLIDE**)

If you truly believe that Jesus rose from the dead, how will that change you?-----

How will you respond?-----

My first of three points is, **that Jesus has risen**.

Let's look together at this eyewitness account at the end of Matthew's Gospel; his biography of Jesus.

In **v1** it's very early on Sunday morning, and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary return to the tomb.

Ch27 tells us the women had watched Jesus suffer and *die* on the cross.

And in v61, they'd been at the tomb on Friday evening when Jesus dead body was placed in it.---

So they didn't come to the wrong tomb, as some people suggest.-----

We're told, an angel from the Lord came down to earth, causing a violent earthquake, and rolled back the stone.

The guards who were posted got freaked and looked like dead men.

Scared out of their wits they probably went pale, frozen with fear.-----

And soon after they scurry back to the priests as **v11** says.

However, they were not they ones the angel spoke to.-----

The women have arrived, and the angel speaks to *them*.

Luke's Gospel tells us it was inside the tomb that the angel spoke to them.-----

Now when we piece together the information from the 4 Gospel *eyewitness* accounts, we

realise that when the women saw the tomb open, Mary Magdalene ran *back* to tell Peter & John

And while Mary was gone the other women went in and were met by the shining angel.

Who announces to them that, Jesus 'is not here, for he has risen, just as he said.'-----

This angel, this messenger from God says Jesus has risen.-----

Once, when I was speaking to some Grade 6's about Jesus rising, they thought I meant he came back from the dead, only to die again later;--- like someone who's had a heart attack and been dead for a few minutes then been resuscitated.-----

But when we speak of Jesus being raised, we mean he came back from the dead, never to die again.-----

The Bible says, after 40 days, Jesus ascended into heaven and is with God the Father, alive now in heaven.

Jesus has risen!----- Jesus is alive!-----

Please understand too, that his resurrection was a bodily one, as **v9** says, he had feet that could be grabbed.-----

It's not that his soul had risen, and his ghost appeared to people, No!-----

For Jews, resurrection meant the body being raised.-----

Besides, Jesus' body was not in the tomb.-----

Neither was his dead body moved or stolen.-----

Despite the story the Jewish leaders circulate through the bribed guards, **v15**, the body was not stolen.-----

Coming back to the women, in **v8** they hurry away from the tomb.

Feeling blown away by what's happened suddenly Jesus meets them.-----

Now John ch20 makes clear that Jesus had just earlier, appeared to Mary Magdalene. She'd arrived back there on the heels of Peter and John.-----

So in **v9** here, Jesus meets & greets the other women on the road.-----

The resurrected Jesus was **first witnessed by women**.-----

And don't miss the astounding significance of this.

But in Jewish and Greek societies, women counted for little.

They were 'nobodies'; sometimes wrongly viewed as property; and forbidden from being witnesses in a court of law.-----

But God chose them to be the first witnesses to the greatest miracle in history.-----

This is the supreme irony.

For when God performs his greatest act since the creation of the world, in raising his Son from the dead; it's testified to by the lips of those who were usually discounted.--- It's

Magnificent! ☺

Doesn't it validate the worth of women in God's mind?-----

Doesn't it validate the truth of Jesus' resurrection?-----

For if Jesus' followers were faking the story that he was alive, they wouldn't have written it with women as the first witnesses.-----

Jesus appeared first to the women.

Then, as he said he would in v10, he appears to the disciples, **v17**.-----

And Matthew who writes, was one of them.-----

The point is Jesus has risen.-----

Do you believe it?-----

Many people, like Jews, believe that Jesus died; but didn't rise from the dead.-----

Most Muslims believe he didn't die, or rise again.

And I suggest most Aussies don't care, and don't think it matters to them.----

But the Bible says Jesus died and was forsaken n' rejected by God.

Because we had rejected God, and he was suffering our judgement.

Then he rose from the dead, smashing death so all trust in him could have life forever.----

Not hell forever but heaven forever.-----

To "believe in Jesus"—to be a Christian—is, to be absolutely convinced that Jesus rose from the dead for real.

And for everyone who doesn't believe that or think it matters, the 'story' of Easter will be their condemnation, rather than a nice time of swapping chocolate.-----

So do you believe that Jesus is risen and living?-----  
 If you've decided today you do believe that, or want to investigate it more, or still have questions, I'd love you to come and talk with me after.-----

In Matthew 28, Jesus being risen leads to **two responses, and the first one is Worship**.(SLIDE)

In v9 when Jesus meets the women, what is their first response?----

*'They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him'.*

When met by the risen Lord Jesus they fall at his feet and worship him.

The word for 'worship' here means to fall down before.

But it's not just about body position, it's an attitude of submission, and about giving him honour, reverence, respect.

And these women do all of these things:

They've fallen at Jesus' feet, they submit to him, they honour and revere him.-----

And when the 11 disciples of Jesus are met by the risen Christ, what's their response?----

They worshipped him.-----

**V17** does say some doubted.-----

That may be because others besides the 11 were present, and doubted it was really him. But it more likely means, 'some hesitated'.

It's not saying some were unbelieving and faithless.

Rather some were uncertain, or there was some hesitation.-----

When Thomas personally witnessed the risen Christ, what did he say to Jesus in Jn20?----

(SLIDE) *'My Lord, and my God'*;----- *'My Lord and my God'*.-----

You see, witnessing the Lord Jesus, risen with a new and glorious resurrection body, it moves people who know & trust him, to worship him.-----

And it's only right for him to be worshipped, and to accept this worship, because Jesus is God.

And we may describe worship as an upward focused activity because worship is directed to God and his Son Jesus in heaven.-----

And if these first eyewitnesses saw the risen Jesus and worshipped him, isn't it right for us to?

I mean **Revelation 5** says the thousands of angels in heaven say, (SLIDE) *'Worthy is the Lamb (Jesus) who was slain to receive...---- honour and glory and praise'*-----

When we know and believe that Jesus is risen, we should worship him.-----

In our heads and hearts we should all acknowledge that Jesus is God, the living Lord, the one with all authority, **v18**;---- who we should bow before.-----

I'm always unsettled and offended when footy fans bow before a great player.

For to me only the creator and saviour God deserves that.-----

Have you submitted to Jesus as Lord, who's worthy of your allegiance, your heart?

To Jesus who deserves to be the most important One in your life?-----

Remember worship isn't something you merely do for an hour at church on Sunday, it's a life, what you do with your whole life.-----

**10 years ago at the last church I served someone who I'll call Lewis, became a follower of Jesus.**

Lewis knew he'd sinned and rejected God in his life, and he put his trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins, and committed to follow Christ as Lord.

And his whole life changed. He wanted to worship Jesus with all of his life.

He looked at his money differently, and now wanted to be generous, and give to the church and to mission, so others could come to know Jesus too.

He wanted to do what Jesus commanded in the Bible.

He wanted to be kind to difficult people at work, to respect his parents, and love his new wife, then teach his kids to follow Jesus too.

Christ took *priority* over other things for him.

Christ changed what Lewis lived for.-----

Just like he did for Sally Graham, who I mentioned at the start, whose addiction, murderous hate, hopelessness and God-rejecting life was slowly changed into one where she loved her husband and kids, and wanted to serve God with her all.-----

So if you trust in Jesus Christ, are you worshipping him?-----

Not just singing his praise on this Easter Sunday, but honouring him in all your life?---

Is there something that should change in your life?-----[Rom12.1-2]

For when we bow before him in our hearts, we will do what he says.-----

And one thing Jesus says, is our next point;

the **second response to the risen Jesus – telling others.(SLIDE)**

I am speaking here to all of us who already know, and worship Jesus.-----

Going and telling others is a repeated idea and important theme in the passage.-----

In **v7** the angel instructs the women to go and tell Jesus' disciples that he is risen and going ahead of them to Galilee.

**v10**, Jesus meets the women, and also says, Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.----

In **v11-15** the chief priests and elders bribe the guards to tell others that Jesus did not rise, his body was stolen.

They are instructed to tell a lie.-----

And 25 yrs later when Matthew writes, he says that Jews 'to this day', have been circulating this lie.-----

Yet in the face of lies, deceit and ignorance, Jesus wants us, to tell the truth.

We're to tell the truth, about Jesus, to others.----

That's what he says in **v19**, 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations'.-----

Jesus is risen and soon departing, & he wants them to tell the Good News to the world.-----

And them telling others, and us telling others, actually flows from our worship of him.

If you genuinely honour Jesus and seek to live for him, it will result in evangelism.

For you will want others to worship him too; for their sake, and for Christ's glory.----

If you are filled with wonder, love and praise, you will be inspired to tell others.-----

The word, 'make disciples' in the original language means to teach, or train someone, and to cause them to become a pupil, a follower, of Jesus.-----

God chooses to bring people into relationship with him as we tell them about Jesus, maybe through your **testimony**.-----

My testimony often begins by saying, I grew up going to church and hearing about Jesus, and I tried to be a good person.

But as a teenager me being good and nice (most of the time) just resulted in me looking down on others, proudly thinking I was *better than* others.

And at uni I heard the good news about Jesus clearly for the first, and I came to see and believe that my pride and self-righteousness was sin, and I could never be good enough for God, none of can.

But Jesus died to take the punishment for my selfishness and sin.

Then he came back from the dead, so that everyone who trusts in him can have life forever with God.-----

And I might finish with a question like, what have you heard about Jesus before?----

Friends, Jesus is the risen Lord we should submit to, He's the once dead now risen Saviour we should trust in, for he can give us forgiveness and life;

peace with God now and a place in heaven forever.-----

Maybe when back at work on Tuesday or you're chatting with your friend this week;

**(SLIDE)**And you may not be in a dune buggy this week *but maybe you could still ask what they did over Easter?*

And why they think we celebrate Easter? And then after listening well, share why it matters to you.-----

Jesus is alive and the Lord with all authority, and it's good news that he can save us, and change us.

But not only does Jesus want us to tell others about him, but also to **speak to one another about him too.**

People start out as followers of him by being baptised, then Jesus says we are to keep teaching one another to obey everything he commanded, **v20**.

So this telling other followers of Jesus about who he is, what he did, what he teaches, it never stops.

Maybe God wants you to teach your children about Jesus' commands, or share at growth group or with a friend over a coffee, what he's been teaching you, as a way to encourage them.-----

Yet teaching people true information isn't enough, we are to teach people to obey.

Being a disciple is a process, a process of listening to God's word, and obeying it, so we grow more like Jesus.-----

We don't all have gifts of teaching or preaching; but we should all have a ministry of encouragement.

As our 5pm congregation heard recently(**SLIDE**) from **1 Thess 5**, all Christians are told, 'encourage one another and build each other up.'

That's an important reason to come to church, and to come weekly.-----

Who does God want you to speak to and encourage?-----

Maybe it's your friend you've noticed hasn't been at church in a while and needs you to ask how they're going, and encourage them to come?

Maybe it's the fellow believer who's giving-in to a particular sin; and they need to be told that their selfishness or short temper needs to stop.----

Maybe you could encourage the person who's going through a hard time, and you could call or visit, And gently remind them that Because Jesus is risen, we're headed for eternal life in an undying body.

And pray for them, that they'd believe the risen and living Jesus is with them.-----

Which is exactly where Matt 28 finishes.-----

Jesus is the one who has conquered death and is alive, he has all authority, he's worthy of our worship, our trust, our lives, and he says tell others about me.

But it's scary, and it's hard, and we know we need help.

So, **How can we do this?**-----

Only because Jesus is with you to empower you and I to do this.

Look at **v20** again - When is Jesus with you?-----

Always; Always; to the very end of the age.

Jesus, by his Spirit, is with you and in you, to give you the strength live his way.-----

You are not alone.-----

Today we've heard that Jesus is risen, and he is risen indeed

And I finish with 3 quick questions:

1. Do you believe it?
2. Will you live this week and your life in worship of him?-----
3. Who do you pray will come to believe in him too, even as you tell them?-----

If we truly believe Jesus is risen, and gives life from the dead, we will act on it.-----

Let's pray that we will.-----