

New Vision

My New Series • the resurrection changes everything • matthew 28:1-11 • 04/04/2018

Main Point

Those who trust in Christ can be encouraged and emboldened even in life's most trying circumstances.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When was the last time you had a “that changes everything” moment? Describe the experience.

What was it about the new information, detail, perspective, or understanding that caused the whole situation to change for you?

How enduring was the experience—is it still changing everything regarding that matter?

We've all had the experience of having our understanding of a situation challenged and changed by a tidbit of information or relevant fact coming to our attention. The salesman had you believing in his bargain—until you read the restrictions and disclaimers. The realtor told you the house had all the country charm you were looking for—too bad it sat right on the freeway. Your friend obviously had blown off the lunch appointment with you—choosing to go to the ER after a serious fall at home. Only irresponsible people allow themselves to get into financial straits—so you thought until 14 months, 2 weeks, and 3 days ago when you were downsized out the door.

Sometimes that which changes is relatively minor with little to no lasting impact on our lives or perspectives. But sometimes, the situation needing change is more serious and consuming, and the change agent makes all the difference in the world.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:1-4.

Matthew just told of the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus (27:32-61). In the time since then, the Jewish authorities had had the tomb guarded so the proof of Jesus' death—His lifeless body—would not disappear and allow His followers to make claims about a miraculous return to life (vv. 62-66). Then early Sunday

morning, with the trauma of seeing Jesus executed still fresh and raw, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” encountered a “violent earthquake” and the startling appearance of a dazzling angel.

What emotions and thoughts do you think might have gone through the hearts and minds of Mary and Mary?

Christians are not immune to overwhelming circumstances. What situations are likely to cause you to become like a dead person, paralyzed by fear? How do you react when you find yourself in such a situation?

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:5-7.

The angel initially told the women two things: “Don’t be afraid” and “I know you are looking for Jesus.” When you face the paralyzing circumstances of your life, how likely are you to think about the fact God knows and appreciates your situation?

What encouragement can you find in knowing God understands both your trying circumstances and whatever fears and emotions those circumstances have generated in you?

Why would the angel have invited the women to “see the place where He lay”? What evidence of Jesus’ life and resurrection have you been pointed to at times you needed assurance of His goodness?

Why would the angel have told the women to “go quickly” to Jesus’ disciples with the news of His resurrection?

One of the difficult things about our most trying circumstances is the sense of isolation we often feel. Though we might acknowledge that many others have gone through similar situations, we still tend to feel isolated, as if we are bearing the load all by ourselves. Yet the first words out of the angel’s mouth were a double encouragement—don’t be afraid, I know your situation, why you’re here. The resurrection means that every follower of Jesus can have courage and boldness in the face of our most trying times. We are not alone and have no need to fear.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 28:8-11.

Mary and Mary departed the tomb “with fear and great joy.” Why do you think they had such conflicting feelings?

Notice the women’s response to their encounter with Jesus—they “worshiped Him.” When was the last time you spontaneously worshiped Jesus? Do you allow the resurrection to change “everything,” or do you try to hold it in reserve for just the “big” things?

Perhaps the fear the women had when they encountered the angel (v. 5) shifted to a different fear when they departed the tomb (v. 8). How has the resurrected Jesus relieved your fear, even in the midst of very difficult circumstances?

The Marys had heard tremendously encouraging news from the angel—Jesus, who had been crucified, had also been resurrected. Surely this was the basis for the “great joy” with which they went on their way. However, the resurrection was still just hearsay to them. Perhaps that is why they also departed from the tomb “with fear.” But hearsay gave way to first-hand knowledge when Jesus met them on their way. It was only then that their mixed feelings gave way to joy. Today, some people like the idea of a resurrected Jesus, but find it to only be hearsay. When they encounter the trials of life, the resurrection doesn’t mean anything to them, because they have never personally encountered the resurrected Jesus. But for those who have met the resurrected Jesus, the resurrection changes everything!

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Are you in the midst of one of those trying, overwhelming, paralyzing circumstances of life? If so, what forms of encouragement can you draw from this passage?

Have you encountered the resurrected Jesus personally? Or is His resurrection just hearsay to you? Will you allow Jesus to make Himself known to you through salvation so the resurrection can change everything for you?

How has meeting the resurrected Jesus changed your life and your attitude toward your varying circumstances? Would the people who know you best say the resurrection has changed the way and frequency with which you worship?

How will you be encouraged and emboldened even in life’s most trying circumstances because you trust the resurrected Jesus?

Pray

As you lead your group to pray, volunteer to help guide any adult who needs to meet the resurrected Jesus personally. Thank God that the resurrection changes everything, meaning each follower of His can be encouraged and emboldened, even in the midst of life’s most fearful circumstances. Ask that believers would be so aware of the difference the resurrection makes in their lives that worship will be a daily and spontaneous occurrence, as well as a planned part of their church life.

Commentary

| matthew 28:1-11

28:1. The Greek phrase translated as “after the Sabbath” refers to sundown on Saturday. In Mark, the Greek phrase refers to sunrise on Sunday. There is much confusion in the chronology of the last week of Jesus’ life, especially events surrounding the resurrection. It is the mentioning of the term “dawning” that causes one to think that the reference may be to Roman time, not Jewish time. There are instances of both being used in the Gospels.

28:2. Two explanations for how the stone was removed are given side by side. There must have been two earthquakes: one at Jesus’ death in 27:54, and another to remove the stone and allow Jesus’ followers inside the empty tomb.

28:3-4. The angel at the tomb was wearing white linen cloth, a symbol of purity. Luke 24:4 and John 20:12 record two angels. This variation between one or two persons or angels is common among the Gospels. Other examples are: (1) the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26) and the two demoniacs (Matt. 8:28); and (2) the blind man (Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35) and two blind men (Matt. 20:30).

28:5. The words of the angel echo what Jesus told them in verse 10. It was the common statement when the supernatural realm broke into the natural (cf. Jesus’ words in Matt. 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John 6:20; Rev. 1:17; and angels in Matt. 28:5; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10).

28:6-7. The Father’s acceptance and approval of the Son’s words and works are expressed in two great events: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and His ascension to the Father’s right hand. Jesus had told them He would meet them on a mountain in Galilee (cf. 26:32, 28:7, 10; 1 Cor. 15:6). This was a way to assert His resurrection and give them hope.

28:8-11. Jesus greeted them in His usual way. It came from a word that meant “rejoice.” Characteristically, Mark and Luke named one women while Matthew named two. John 20:17 records only Mary taking hold of Jesus’ feet. This was the oriental way of showing submission, respect, and even worship. What a designation for these fearful disciples (cf. 12:15).