

# Jesus' Resurrection: The Power to Change

Matthew 27:50-28:20 04/12/09 a.m. (Easter Sunday)

**Central Truth: Christ promises the power we need to change and be and do all He wants through His powerful presence working in and through us!**

**ENGAGE:** Living in a fallen world we desperately need hope. Six weeks ago four strong powerful men, including two NFL players **Corey Smith** and **Marques Cooper**, along with South Florida alum **Will Bleakley** and **Nick Schuyler** left **Clearwater, Florida at 6 am on a Saturday morning [Feb. 2, 2009]** for a weekend getaway. Almost immediately after they anchored their 21 foot vessel some 30 plus miles off shore in the Gulf of Mexico to do deep water fishing, **they encountered a storm.** **Schuyler** told investigators that about two to four hours after their boat flipped in rough seas, one of the two National Football League players on board **gave up hope and let himself be swept away,** according to relatives briefed by the Coast Guard. A few hours later, the second one did the same.

“We were told that Nick said the two NFL players took their life jackets off and drifted out to sea,” said Bob Bleakley, whose son **Will, 25**, also perished, when sometime early Monday he thought he saw a light in the distance. **Will took off his life jacket to swim toward the light,** hoping to get help. When rescuers arrived later on Monday, only **Nick Schuyler** was still clinging to the overturned boat.

**Hope**, we all need it, if we are to face life's difficulties with perseverance. **As a husband or wife** some of you today need hope that God can bring about needed changes in your life and in your spouse's life. Some of you are at the point of despair. Is there any hope? Can God bring about the changes that are needed? Can God give you the perseverance you need to do what is right in God's sight?

**Others of you feel at the point of despair over personal issues of sin.** At times, you feel as if a sinful habit has you by the throat and threatens to strangle the life right out of you. You find yourself in an ongoing struggling with a sinful habit, even after you've purposed in your heart, "I'll never do that again." **Some of you may be at the point where you feel, "Wouldn't it be so much easier, if I just took off my life vest of commitments I have made and drift off to do what I want to do."** Living for the Lord and doing what's right just seems too difficult at times.

For some of you, as you look at the struggles you face, you may even wonder, **"Is life worth living?"** Your problems seem like mountains too high to scale. **Is there any hope?** Debts mount up; or health issues grow worse, relationships crumble. In the midst of the trials of life we can easily lose hope and enthusiasm as we face what seems an overwhelming situation. What hope does God give us in these emotionally overwhelming situations of life that all of us face at times in our lives?

**FOCUS:** This morning we are going to see that **Christ promises the power you & I need to change. Specifically, we are going to see that Christ promises the power we need to change and be and do all God wants THROUGH CHRIST'S POWERFUL PRESENCE WORKING IN AND THROUGH US!** Christ's message to you and me this morning is there is **HOPE** if you & I will look up to Him in faith! **The promise of Jesus' resurrection is that the same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead is at work within you and me.**

**Jesus Christ has promised His powerful presence to be with you through every situation you face in life.**

**SET THE STAGE biblically:** Now if anyone would have reason to feel as if their situation was hopeless it would be the Roman centurion and his men who put Jesus to death. Can you imagine the guilt they must have felt when they suddenly realize they had crucified the Son of God? Some of these Roman soldiers may have driven the large nails (spikes) into Jesus. As the apostle Matthew continues his narrative of Jesus' death and its significance Matthew records several events that follow the death of Jesus, all of which help us understand the impact of Jesus' death.

**ANNOUNCE the passage:** For the Scripture reading this morning please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 27:50-54; 28:1-10, 16-20 [p. 881].

What hope does God give as we face insurmountable problems? The first major point I want us to see this morning is this:

## **The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means we have the power to change (Matt 27:50-54).**

**Jesus' death and resurrection mean that victorious life over death is a reality!** God promises that each of us who embrace Jesus' true identity, putting our faith in Christ are transformed. The apostle Paul promises:

**SLIDE:** "So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; what is old has passed away – look, what is new has come! (2 Cor 5:17 NET) **[BLANK SLIDE]** In Jesus Christ you are a new person! You are "born again."

Now Christ wants to live His life out through you! You talk about giving meaning and purpose to life! Rather than merely living for ourselves, **Christ desires to live His life through us!**

**SLIDE:** "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20 NET). **[BLANK SLIDE] !!!** The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means you have the power you need to change. You don't have to face your problems alone! Rely on Christ's faithfulness. After all think of the love and sacrifice of Himself He gave on your behalf!!!

Now as we come to Matt 27, whereas Jesus' own people had not believed, we will see that the centurion who oversaw Jesus' execution and those with him recognized Jesus' identity and put their faith in Jesus. When Jesus died God gave signs that showed His approval of Jesus and disapproval of His executioners. Matthew records several events that follow upon the death of Jesus, all of which help us understand the impact of Jesus' death (cf. Wilkins, 904ff.). Specifically we will note how these events were used to demonstrate **God's power to change**.

**The first testimony comes from the temple.** At the moment of Jesus' death the temple curtain is torn in two, from top to bottom. **Note v. 51a [NKJV]:** *Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* The fact that this curtain is torn from top to bottom indicates **God Himself removes the separation between Himself and us**. By tearing the curtain that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple **God signifies that the new and living way is now open for all people to enter into his presence through the sacrifice of Jesus** on the cross. **SLIDE(S)** Heb 10:19-22: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, <sup>10:20</sup> **by the fresh and living way that He inaugurated for us**

**through the curtain, that is, through His flesh,** <sup>10:21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>10:22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings” (Heb 10:19-22 NET). [BLANK SLIDE]

God’s tearing of the temple curtain testifies that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross fulfilled the hopes expressed in Israel’s years of temple sacrifice. The OT sacrifices covered the sins, in anticipation of Christ’s coming to take away our sins. Jesus, as our great high priest, offered the ultimate and perfect sacrifice, His own perfect life. **Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself turns away God’s wrath and cleanses us from our sin** [cf. 1 John 2:2 NET notes on the Greek word (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*), “atoning sacrifice”]. APPL: **Through Jesus you and I have the privilege of permanent access into God’s presence!** Let’s avail ourselves of that privilege!

**Trans:** Matthew records a second testimony to the impact of Jesus’ death.

**The second testimony God provides to show His approval of Jesus is a multifaceted sign involving earthquakes, splitting rocks, and raised bodies.** Matthew says first that “the earth shook and the rocks were split apart” (v. 51b). This language implies a significant earthly reaction to the divine events of the cross. **The earthquake, coupled with rocks splitting to open tombs is another significant testimony to the meaning of Jesus’ crucifixion.** Another earthquake will soon testify to a further significant divine event—Jesus resurrection. **Look at Matt 28:2 (NKJV):** “*And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it.*”

\*\*Now related to this second testimony involving an earthquake and splitting rocks Matthew records in chapter 27 an event not found in the other Gospels. Note Matt 27:51-52 (NKJV): “*And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*” **Think about this!** Here at the moment of Christ’s death a mighty earthquake rocks Jerusalem, splitting rocks to open tombs. Then three days later following Christ’s resurrection the bodies of many saints who had died are raised. They come walking out of the tombs after Christ’s resurrection. They then make their way into Jerusalem and appear to many people.

**Can you picture the scene?** Here’s Simeon or perhaps, Anna, raised back to life. They come walking into Jerusalem and come to the home of their neighbors, knock, knock, knock... A young Jewish mother comes to the door. When she sees who it is, the strength goes from her legs and she quickly sits down before she faints. She can’t believe it. We were at your funeral some time ago! What? How? Matthew records that the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep (that is died) were raised. “Saints” or “holy people” probably refers to OT figures—heroes and martyrs from Israel’s history selected to bear miraculous testimony to Jesus own resurrection. Just as Moses and Elijah were selected to appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:1-8) so **God choose some people to affirm Jesus’ resurrection.** The difference is that in this case it is a resurrection of the bodies of these holy people. (These people, like Jesus Himself, may have appeared to others for a short time and then eventually been taken to heaven.)

\*\*\*Now what’s the purpose of God providing this testimony of many dead OT believers being bodily raised and coming out of their graves after Christ’s resurrection? **Matthew’s unique record of these events emphasizes the victory over death that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross accomplishes.** God’s supernatural raising of the bodies of these holy ones and their appearance in Jerusalem gives striking testimony to Jesus’ accomplished work on the cross and Christ’s own resurrection as well.

**So the miraculously opened tombs at the time of Jesus' death anticipate Jesus resurrection.**

Their resurrection after Jesus' resurrection three days later, and appearance to people in Jerusalem give witness to the success and effectiveness of Jesus' work on the cross! Through His death on the cross Jesus defeated death! Through Christ's death on the cross He broke the power of the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set us free! [Cf. Heb 2:14-15.]

\*\*\*Now the resurrection of these holy ones following Christ's resurrection is a foretaste of the resurrection to which we, as believers in Jesus Christ, can look forward. Through Jesus' death and resurrection a new day has arrived, a day when **death has been defeated** by Christ's own death! Christ's death and resurrection assures each of us who put our faith in Christ of our own resurrection to eternal life.

APPL: Now the fact that **Christ's death defeated death** gives hope and comfort to you and me. While the pain of losing a loved one can be overwhelming, and while part of the healing process is to grieve over our loss, for us, who are believers in Jesus Christ, death ushers us into God's presence. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But also Christ's death and resurrection reminds us that **death has been defeated.** Christ's bodily resurrection promises that we will be raised bodily from the grave as well! (Cf. 1 Cor 15:20-23).

**\*\*Trans:** Now the fact of Jesus' death on the cross for your sins and resurrection is not meant to simply be noted by you, as you continue on your own way. **Jesus' death and resurrection has the power to change your life.**

**The third testimony following the death of Jesus is that of the centurion and the guards present at Jesus' crucifixion.** Now this centurion, an officer in charge of one hundred soldiers, probably has been in attendance since Jesus' Roman trial. He has been given the responsibility to carry out Pilate's order to crucify Jesus. He may have supervised Jesus' beating. He has allowed the soldiers to ridicule Jesus. He ordered the nails to be driven into Jesus' body. He probably watched with amusement as his guards taunted Jesus with the sour drink. He has watched with scorn as Jesus' own people, the Jews, mock and taunt Jesus. But somewhere along the way God's Spirit moves in the heart of this centurion and his men. They have watched Jesus die. They have heard Jesus' eerie cry, "My God, my God WHY have you forsaken me?"

As the centurion and those with him watch the supernatural darkening of the sky, [perhaps even hear of the temple curtain torn in two?], definitely feel the earth shake from the mighty earthquake, and see the rocks split, opening tombs, **they see clear evidence that Jesus is who He said He was.** In awe the centurion and those with him, the guards who accompany him, see and experience all that has taken place. Suddenly, after experiencing the mighty earthquake and seeing the rocks split open nearby tombs, in extreme terror **they turn from unbelievers to take a step of faith and acknowledge the truth of Jesus' testimony.** They recognize Jesus is innocent of the false charges brought against Him. This leads them to the logical conclusion Jesus is truly who He claimed to be—the Son of God! **Note v. 54 (NKJV):** *"So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"* (27:54 NKJV).

APPL: This cry of faith by the centurion and those with him underscores to you and me that **God offers salvation and mercy to ALL. Jesus' death and resurrection has the power to change every person, including you!** It doesn't matter what you have done. How God -rejecting you may have been.

But if you are to come to faith in Jesus you must recognize your need of a Savior. The centurion and those with him recognized that they had put to death the Son of God! Even though they were carrying out orders, they had wronged the One who put their government authorities in power. They had crucified the Son of God!

**Have you come to that point in your spiritual journey where you have recognized your part in Jesus' crucifixion?** Do you realize that your sins helped nail Christ to the cross? Jesus went to the cross to pay for your sins, my sins, the sins of the world.

**Today Jesus offers to forgive you for all your sins and to give you a new life in Him!** Jesus offers to give you a new beginning. Jesus offers to help you live for the purpose for which God created you! Will you open the door of your heart to Jesus?

Now someone may ask: **What must you do to be saved?** Listen to how the apostle Paul answers this question when asked by the Philippian jailer who had been responsible to guard Paul and Silas, two early missionaries of the Christian faith. SLIDES: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>16:31</sup> They replied, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved**, you and your household." <sup>16:32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house. <sup>16:33</sup> At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. <sup>16:34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household" (Acts 16:30-34 NET). [Blank SLIDE]

**APPL:** What about you, Dad? God wants to do a mighty work in and through you and your family. What are you doing with the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection? Have you opened your heart and life to Christ and invited Him to come in and take control of your life? Have you put your faith in Christ alone to save you and forgive you of all your sins?

**Trans:** There's a second promise that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides for us. What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean?

## **The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means the power to change because of the promise of Christ's powerful presence (Matt 28:1-10, 16-20).**

Christ's resurrection means we have the promise of His powerful presence at all times available to us. The fact that Jesus is risen from the dead means you and I don't ever have to be alone. Note with me the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of His presence He gives to us. Look with me first at the fact of Christ's resurrection in **Matt 28:1-10** (NKJV): *Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them,*

saying, **“Rejoice!”** So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, **“Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”**

I find it significant that as these women leave the tomb and begin to run to tell Jesus’ disciples that Christ is risen from the dead, it’s at that point that Jesus meets them. **These women experience Christ’s presence as they set off to tell others that Christ is indeed risen!**

Trans: **So too, for you and me. Christ promises the power we need to change and be and do all He wants through His powerful presence working in and through us!** Note with me the promise Christ gives of His powerful presence as we too go to tell others. **Look at Matt 28:16-20** (NKJV): *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

**Christ promises the power you need to change and be and do all He wants through His powerful presence.** The message of Easter is that Christ is indeed risen from the dead. And He has promised to be with you if you have placed your faith in Him. !!!

**Jesus promises His powerful presence to be with you as you take the initiative to bring the gospel to people.** Isn’t that encouraging? As you seek to witness to someone, yield yourself to Christ, ask Him to lead and direct you as you seek to represent Him well before those around you. Trust and believe what Christ says here. He promises you and me His eternal presence as we make disciples.

**Jesus is also present as new disciples are baptized and are taught to obey all that Christ has commanded.**

**Jesus is present as you and I, as maturing disciples, go through all stages of our lives.** Christ does not say to you, “Oh, now you are almost thirteen, so I will no longer be with you through your teen years.” Or, “Now you are sixty-five, so you are going to be on your own now.” No, Jesus promises to be with you throughout each stage of your life!

**Jesus is also present as we, His people, journey through this age awaiting His return.** Jesus is with us as we seek to carry out His will, bringing each person to maturity in Christ.

**Jesus is always present for you and me, His disciples, to follow as our Master.**

**CONCLUSION: Easter reminds us that we worship and follow a risen Master who is with us at all times.** Today Christ reminds you of His very presence to comfort your individual needs. Christ today reminds you that He will sustain you through all of your days. Christ will sustain you in your weaknesses, your sorrows, your joy, your power, your pain. Christ will sustain you to the “very end of the age,” i.e., until the completion of God’s plan for this age. **Don’t give up!**

**Jesus’ promise of His powerful presence assures you that your world is not out of control.** Jesus’ promise of His powerful presence assures you that **Christ is a present help to you today in your time of trouble.** Jesus’ promise of His powerful presence reminds you that **the work Christ accomplished on the cross is continually available through His risen and ascended ministry.**

The wonderful promise of Christ's powerful presence **should spur each of us on to proclaim the good news of the presence of the kingdom of God in our lives.** Did you realize that you are an ongoing chapter of this story? **You are a walking testimony of the presence of the risen Christ.** You are a living demonstration of the power of the kingdom of God. May we be faithful and obedient disciples of Jesus. By God's grace let's seek to walk in the closest intimacy with Christ. And let's proclaim the good news that **Jesus is with us** to the very end of the age.

Today Jesus knocks at the door of your life. Open the door. Give Christ control of your situation. Trust Him fully. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10). If you are here and don't know the Lord, Christ, knocks today and desires for you to put your faith in Him. Life is so uncertain. Six weeks ago, four young men went out for a day of fishing, not knowing that only one would return.

(Salvation) I'm going to lead us in a prayer of salvation as we close you can use to express to God that you are trusting in Christ. Please understand that saying a prayer has never saved anyone. *Prayer is only the means by which you tell God that you are trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior.*

"Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. Nothing that I am or do makes me deserving of heaven. I believe Jesus Christ died for me and rose from the grave. Right now I trust Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. I am not trusting in my good life, my best efforts, my baptism, or my church membership to take me to heaven. **I am trusting Christ alone to save me.** Thank you for the forgiveness and everlasting life I now have. Help me to live a life from this day forward that says "thank you" for what You have just given me. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Baptisms