



GOOD FRIDAY & EASTER

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Warm Up

1. What stood out to you most this Easter as you reflected on Jesus' death and resurrection?
2. Why do you think the death of Jesus is called "Good Friday" when it seems so dark and tragic?

Read Matthew 26:1–13

3. What does Jesus' calm acceptance of his upcoming crucifixion tell us about his understanding of God's plan?
4. Why is the woman's act of pouring perfume on Jesus described as "beautiful"? How does this moment prepare us for what's to come?
5. How does this passage show that Jesus' death was not an accident, but a fulfillment of God's promises?
6. How can seeing Jesus' death as part of God's plan give us hope today?

Read Matthew 27:11–26

7. Why is Barabbas being released such a powerful image for understanding what Jesus did for us?
8. How does this unjust trial help us understand the justice and mercy of God?
9. Have you ever struggled to believe that your sins are forgiven? How does Jesus taking your place help address those doubts?

Read Matthew 27:45–56

10. What's the significance of the temple curtain tearing in two at the moment of Jesus' death?
11. How does Jesus' cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" help us understand the depth of his suffering—and his love?
12. How does the cross show both the seriousness of sin and the incredible grace of God?

Read Matthew 28:1–10

13. Why is the resurrection essential to our hope as Christians? What if Jesus stayed dead?
14. Which piece of resurrection "evidence" (the women, the empty tomb, or the changed disciples) do you find most compelling? Why?
15. What does the resurrection prove about who Jesus is?
16. How does the resurrection give us a "sure and certain" hope today?

APPLY: What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make in your everyday life?

PRAY: *Gracious Father, thank you so much for the hope that we have because Jesus is the crucified and risen Lord. Please help us to share our story that others might be pointed to know you and be built up in Christ. Amen.*

TITLE: Matthew 28:1-10

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: The resurrection of Jesus secures our hope of eternal life.

STRUCTURE:

- The Evidence
- The Hope

- At school I was terrible at sports.
- In my 6 years of playing cricket, I never made it off the bottom grade
- In my 4 years of soccer, I never scored a goal
- In my 2 years of rugby, I never scored a try
- In every athletics race, I came last,
- In every cross-country race, I was in the bottom 5; and
- In my Grade 10 PE lesson at my new highschool - while playing duck-duck goose, I managed to run into our PE teacher. He didn't move an inch and I ended up flat on my back like a pancake.
- The odds of Michael Calder scoring a goal or try - were so bad, that it would have been the safest bet in the world.
- You could have (and probably still could!) bet your life-savings on it without a blink of an eye.
- It's a sure and certain thing - that Michael Calder is rubbish at sport.

- But something even more sure and certain, is the news that we are looking at today.
- And it's not worth just betting some money on it - but it's worth giving out whole lives over to!
- That is - the news of the resurrection of Jesus. The rising back to life of Jesus.
- I am so extraordinarily sure of the resurrection of Jesus and the hope that it brings and the assurance that it brings - that I have given my whole life over to him
- Today - 3 young men will make promises to give their whole lives over to him - because of their sure and certain hope in the resurrection of Jesus.

- In-fact if the resurrection of Jesus did not happen - then I am an absolute fool
 - I'm in the wrong job! I should go back to coffee-making!
- If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen - then the disciples and the church over the past 2000 years have pulled off the greatest hoax known to human kind.
- If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen - then Christians are most of all to be pitied.
- The stakes are sky high.
- But the certainty of the hope is astronomical.

- On Friday, we saw that the death of Jesus brings us amazing hope
 - It's the centre of God's plan for salvation
 - It's the way in which the guilty can be forgiven
 - It's the way in which the door gets flung open to our relationship with God.
- Even when it looked like all hope was lost as Jesus' body was sealed in the tomb, there was amazing hope.
- But three days later - on this Easter Sunday, Jesus gloriously and miraculously rose again from the dead.
- And his resurrection seals the deal!
- Today, we'll look at the evidence, and then look at the hope.

- **The Evidence**
- Firstly - the Evidence
- **The Women**
- First piece of evidence - the women.
 - 28:1-6 "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great

earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. "

- In the first century Jewish culture, the role of women was sadly, minimal.
- In fact, in the courtroom - the testimony of women wasn't accepted as evidence, because women, again sadly, were seen as untrustworthy!
- Their word wasn't accepted.
- And yet - here in Matthew, we see that it's the women who first see and proclaim that Jesus is risen! And in the three other biographies of Jesus - it's the same!
- The women are the first ones to proclaim the gospel of the risen Jesus!
- Now - If the writers of the Gospels were wanting to craft a made-up and believable story for people to believe - there's no way that they would have cast women as the first characters to see Jesus.
- The only reason that they would put this in here - is only if it was true!
- And they didn't go to the wrong tomb (Because they had seen Jesus be placed in the tomb on Friday), they weren't seeing a vision, because they touched Jesus and took hold of his feet!

- **The Empty Tomb**

- Second piece of evidence - the empty tomb.
- When the women got to the tomb - there was no body.
- When some of the other disciples got to the tomb - there was still no body.
- The only thing left was the linen that Jesus' body was wrapped in - all neatly folded up.
- So then:
- Maybe the disciples took the body?
 - Well probably not - there were guards stationed there for that very reason.
 - At the end of Ch27, Matthew tells us that the Jewish leaders had heard that Jesus said that he would rise again - so to stop the disciples from stealing the body and lying, they placed some Roman guards at the entrance to the tomb.
 - And in a battle between the nomadic fishermen and Roman guards, the disciples lose 100% of the time.
- Maybe the Jewish leaders took the body to protect it from being stolen?
 - Again, probably not.
 - Because if they did have the body of Jesus in their possession - then as the Christian movement began - they could have just wheeled out Jesus' body to prove everyone wrong!
- And if anyone did take the body - why would they leave the linen there neatly folded up?
 - They would have to do it with massive secrecy, so there wouldn't have been anytime to fold the linen.. *I have a hard time keeping up with my own linen folding!*
- The only conclusion must be - that the tomb was empty, because Jesus really rose.

- **The Changed Disciples**

- The third piece of evidence - but certainly not the last - is the change in the disciples.
- The disciples were Jesus' closest followers - 11 of them by this point.
- And they were a ragtag bunch - fishermen, tax collectors, and others.
- And after the arrest and death of Jesus - we're told that these disciples went and hid in a room and locked themselves in because they thought they were next!
- And yet just a few months later - they went boldly proclaiming the news of the resurrection of Jesus even to the death penalty!
- How could this change happen?
- Only if Jesus was really resurrected.
- Because people don't die for a lie.
 - *In 1972, five men placed secret recording devices in the headquarters of the Democratic Party (in the Watergate Hotel) in the election on behalf of candidate Richard Nixon.*

- *The initial report said that these five men were thieves!*
 - *And Nixon defunded the further investigation into the matter*
- *They were tried as thieves and sentenced as thieves - but were given an option.*
- *If they cooperated - they would have their sentences reduced.*
- *And they did - and the truth eventually came out.*
- *In the space of 12 months, they went from lying with the certainty of the lengthy sentence, to breaking down and telling the truth for the promise of freedom.*
- People don't go to jail for a lie.
- People certainly don't go to the death penalty for a lie.
- The disciples had nothing to gain by lying, nothing to gain by crafting this story...if Jesus stayed dead, they could have just faded off into the distance and probably live a long and peaceful life!
- And yet, the constant and bold message of the disciples was that Jesus was alive!
- How could this happen?
- Only if Jesus was really resurrected.
- How could millions of lives over the course of human history be shaped and changed by this good news? Only if Jesus was really resurrected.
- How could we be looking at this 2000 years later on the other side of the world to these events? Only if Jesus was really resurrected.
- In fact the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is so strong that even scholars have to admit that "there is a resurrection shaped dent in human history"
- If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen - then the disciples and the church over the past 2000 years have pulled off the greatest hoax known to human kind.
- That's the evidence.
- Now what does it all mean for us?
- **The Hope**
- The amazing hope that this offers, is that Jesus not only has defeated sin in his death on the cross - but has defeated death itself in his bodily - full - resurrection!
 - In the battle between death and Jesus; the tomb and Jesus - death had just as likelihood of winning as a School-boy Michael in a 100m race - **absolutely NONE**
- And so Whoever puts their trust in Jesus not only has been forgiven of their sins - but has been given the assurance of eternal life with God for eternity - because death has been defeated
- Paul, who once was a fierce persecutor of the early believers but then turned Christian after seeing the risen Jesus - puts it like this:
 - 1 Cor 15:21-22 "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."
- All of those in Christ, or all of those who put their trust in Jesus, shall be made alive!
- Just like Barrabus we have been freed from our punishment
- Just like Jesus, we will be destined for eternal life.
- Death is now just a blip on the radar for those who trust in Jesus!
 - 1 Cor 15:54-55 - "Then the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
- This hope is completely and utterly assured, because of Jesus' resurrection.
- Not a type of hope where you don't know the outcome - but a sure and certain hope based on cold-hard facts and evidence.
- The resurrection of Jesus also gives us the hope that Jesus is supremely Lord of all. Completely in Authority and control over all things - including death.
- What hope is there in the cross? Actually - none if Jesus stayed dead.
- A dead Jesus can't help anyone and is useless!

- But Jesus is alive - has gone up into heaven, and will come again to bring all of those who trust in him into eternal life. And those who don't, will have that life taken away from them.
- *I once heard of a pastor who was visiting a lady called Cheryl in hospital.*
- *A few days before after what was a routine blood test, Cheryl's doctor rang her and said, "Pack your things, you're not well, an ambulance is on its way."*
- *The prognosis wasn't great and death was imminent.*
- *And as this pastor was chatting to her, she was rejoicing in the fact that she was confident in going to eternal life and meeting Jesus!*
- *She couldn't wait!*
- *During the conversation - a nurse overheard what was going on and said, "Well you never know Cheryl, you might get better!"*
- *And Cheryl replied "I better not, otherwise I'm going to clock you over the head!"*
- That's the difference that Jesus' resurrection makes.
- That's the sure and certain HOPE of Easter.
 - The Centre of God's plan for saving us
 - The guilty are freed and forgiven
 - The door to relationship with God has been flung open
 - The enemy of death has been defeated and eternal life is assured for those who trust in Jesus.
- If you're here today and don't yet trust in Him - today is a great day to do so.