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Matthew 28:1-10

Meeting Jesus in Matthew: The Challenging Tomb

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Introduction: **(SL#1)**

1. I hate it when things break. My iPhone 5 died this week.
2. Since about October I've noticed the signs (bad wifi, reception, not reliable).
3. The final blow came when I dropped it (chipped and fading screen, negative picture).
4. No matter how much I wanted my iPhone to come back this week I couldn't bring it back.
5. Now what if I discovered a store that would replace my iPhone for free if I'd just ask.
6. Maybe some of you would "unintentionally" smash your phones so you could get one too.
7. What if I was too afraid to tell you, because I didn't think you'd believe me?
8. I'm not an iPhone expert, what if I don't explain all the features?
9. Last week we read the story of something being broken, Jesus dying on the cross.
10. This week we're reading the epilogue, the story of Jesus being restored.
11. The epilogue is also an invitation to share that news with others. **(SL#2)**

I. God chooses the least of us to be His messengers (**Read v. 1**)

A. Those who culture calls inferior, God chooses to be his messengers.

1. Women followed and learned from Jesus (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, Martha, and the mother of James and John).
2. He interacted with them in groups and individually like the woman at the well (John 4).
3. Roman law limited how much trust could be placed in women's speech and testimony.
4. The "guard's report" in v. 11-15 would have been more credible than their testimony.
5. This is dishonoring for the 11 disciples who become the church's leaders (hiding).
6. If you're going to make up a religion, you don't start it this way.
7. God chooses to use the weakest and most unexpected of us to do his will.

B. Anyone can share their faith story at Cornerstone—you don't have to be a professional.

1. When we share our faith stories, our testimonies, we don't hide our imperfections.
2. We show how God uses weak and broken people like us to serve and love him.
3. God chooses the least of us to be his messengers. **(SL#3)**

II. God's message shakes us with its power and tests our belief (**Read v. 2-4**)

A. The angel demonstrates the power of God's message.

1. When Jesus died, the earth shook, rocks split and tombs broke open (Matt 27:51-52).
2. When the angel descends, we see the same thing happen, but almost in the reverse (Jesus lives!).
3. The angel rolls back the tomb's cover (We have gravestones and headstones, but not tombstones).
4. In Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade, Indiana pushes off a tomb stone casket cover (too light).
5. A tombstone is an immovable symbol of death and here the angel sits on it—dis-honoring death.
6. The angel is what we would imagine a messenger of God is like (lightning, shining bright white).
7. Like a magnifying glass, we magnify God's power when he empowers us in our weakness.

- B. The power of God's message incapacitates the soldiers with fear.
1. The soldier's whose job it was to guard a corpse become like corpses themselves.
 2. The angel doesn't tell the guards that they don't need to be afraid, they're not believers.
 3. They see an angel from heaven, take a payout, and claim the disciples stole his body (v. 11-15).
 4. Maybe you think, if I can only see God, an angel, or miracle, I'll believe, but that's not true.
 5. When our fear is greater than our belief, we become incapacitated and disobey.

(God's message shakes us with its power and tests our belief.)

(So what is this message God gives us in this story? The message is this...) (SL#4)

III. Fear not! Jesus is risen. Go and tell! (Read v. 5-7)

A. Fear not! (v. 5)

1. Unlike the guards, the women are followers of Jesus, so they don't need to be afraid.
2. Verse 1 says Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went "to look at the tomb."
3. Mark 16 and Luke 24 tell us they were there to anoint Jesus' body with burial spices.
4. Verse 5 tells us they went to the tomb to look for Jesus, maybe curious about his promise to rise.
5. In Matthew 16:21 Jesus said "he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"(NIV)
6. The women don't need to be afraid because of their belief, and neither do you if you believe.

B. Jesus is risen. (v. 6)

1. The angel's message is that Jesus is alive and his body is no longer in the tomb.
2. Jesus has risen from the grave, and didn't need the angel to let him out, he's already gone.
3. Jesus body is truly his body, but it's better than when he died (appear, disappear, go thru walls).
4. It's kind of like if my iPhone 5 came back as an iPhone 1000 (same phone, better features).
5. Why is the resurrection so important to Christianity? If Christ rose, Christians rise.
6. If Jesus came back from the dead, it proves he's God and all his teachings are true (resumé).

C. Usually our first experience with death is our grandparents.

1. I remember going to my grandmother's funeral in Boulder CO.
2. My parents had her body cremated and buried her in a cemetery with a small gravestone.
3. My dad told me we didn't need to go back because she's not there—her spirit is gone.
4. The spirit does leave when we die, but part of who we are is our bodies.
5. The resurrection tells us that if you trust in Jesus, you'll get a refurbished body like Jesus (leg).
6. It tells me I'll get to hold my grandmother's hand again, hug her, and watch wheel of fortune.

(Fear not! Jesus is risen. Now what's our response?)

D. Go and tell!

1. The angel tells the women to go and tell his disciples to go to Galilee to see Jesus.
2. Jesus told his disciples in Matt 26:32 "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."
3. They should be in Galilee, but instead they're hiding somewhere in Jerusalem afraid.
4. The angel commands the women there is no time to waste, urgently, quickly—Go and tell!

(Fear not! Jesus is Risen. Go and tell!)

- E. In our culture, many people are "C&E church attenders"—Christmas & Easter.
1. Instead of fighting against this, we want to use it as an opportunity to entice newcomers to stay.
 2. So we're all pulling together for what we call a "Big Day" (new series, introductions, etc.).
 3. It's a great opportunity to invite one of your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or Top 10.
 4. Maybe you're afraid—do it "quickly" before you lose your nerve.
 5. Maybe they are better than you, smarter than you, prettier than you, and taller than you.
 6. Culturally inferior women are commanded to tell culturally superior men to obey Jesus.
 7. Society and maybe the men themselves told them they weren't good enough, but God disagreed.
 8. Maybe you don't want to invite your neighbors because it's too close to home.
 9. Jesus tells his disciples to meet him in "Galilee" (their neighborhood) for a reason.
 10. Your friends, neighbors, and coworkers have loved ones who died—the resurrection matters.

(We share because we want to obey Jesus, but Jesus offers us an even greater reward.)
(Jesus not only tells us it's worth it, he shows us he's worth it.) (SL#5)

IV. Obedient messengers get to meet the message Himself (Read v. 8-10).

- A. The women are afraid, but their joy overcomes their fear (v. 8).
1. The original language says they "departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy..."
 2. Their happiness that Jesus is alive and the resurrection is real conquers their anxieties.
 3. Do you remember the first time you jumped off the diving board when you were a kid?
 4. You knew something about jumping into the pool would make it worth it (recapture that!).
 5. If you struggle with feeling ashamed of Jesus, meditate on the joy of the resurrection.
 6. Even if your boss kills you for inviting her to church, you'll rise again.

(What's the reward? What makes obedience worth it?)

- B. In our obedience, we get to meet and worship Jesus (v. 9).
1. The women are greeted by Jesus as they're obeying the angel.
 2. You don't get to see God do great things from your comfort zone (seeing great things here).
 3. You don't get to see your friend come to Christ unless you're willing to step out in faith.
 4. We get to meet the real Jesus, not an imaginary one, but a normal one who says "Hello."
 5. The women touch Jesus' feet, proving he's not a ghost, and they worship him.
 6. As the women obey him, they get to experience all his fullness, his real-ness.
 7. Obeying Jesus leads to fully experiencing Jesus leads to truly worshipping Jesus.

(What about those of us who aren't like the courageous women, and are more like the fearful men?)

- C. Jesus can restore and use the disobedient disciple.
1. Disobedient disciples get to see Jesus too, but they have to wait longer than obedient disciples.
 2. Notice how the angel refers to the disciples as "disciples", but Jesus calls them "my brothers."
 3. The last time he saw them, they slept on him, fled the scene, and Peter denied him three times.
 4. Jesus forgives those who betray him and turns disobedient disciples into brothers and sisters.
 5. If you trust in Jesus, your sin of disobedience perished with him in the grave, but sin no more.
 6. Obedient messengers get to meet the message himself.

(At the end of its message, the angel tells the women to tell the disciples, "There you will see him.")
(But Jesus ends with a slightly different message, "There they will see me.")
(As we step out in faith, Jesus says, "You will see me.")
(Fear not! Jesus is risen. Go and tell!) **(SL#6)**

Conclusion:

1. The BBC updated Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes with a modern adaptation.
2. Benedict Cumberbatch plays Sherlock and Martin Freeman Holmes, and they're the best of friends.
3. In "The Reichenbach Fall" Sherlock is forced to kill himself or his friend Watson will die.
4. So right in front of Watson, he steps off a roof and plummets to his death to save his friend.
5. Watson sees his friend die and is completely torn apart mentally and emotionally.
6. The final scene shows Watson saying goodbye and pleading for one more miracle, "Don't be dead."
7. In the last shot, the camera shows Watson grieving and Sherlock watching him alive and well.
8. Sherlock doesn't say anything to Watson, but in Matthew Jesus gives us one final message.
9. He says my "Hello, you don't need to be afraid. I am alive, and I'll see you soon. Spread the news."
10. Fear not! Jesus is risen. Go and tell!

Isaiah 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (NIV®)