



Easter 2019
“Fear Dismantling, Resurrection Believing, Joy Receiving”
By Pastor Jody May

Matthew 28:1-10 ESV

The Resurrection

28 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. **2** 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. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. **4** And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. **5** But the angel 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 has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” **8** So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

We are witnessing the first preaching of the Gospel, post resurrection account, and we are **witnessing what the gospel attacks first when God’s people are graced with faith to believe in the good news of the Resurrection. It’s the emotional response that we all have from our sin – FEAR.** It was confronted in the story we just read, and I want to show us why and how Fear must give away to the empty tomb giving you freedom to pursue God as you were meant to do.

Here’s why we need to deal with Fear as God’s people.

Fear debilitates us in 2 ways:

- **First, it keeps us from confessing our sins to God and others, we fear judgment.**
- **Second, it prevents us from living as a representative of Jesus and His Kingdom.**

Let’s talk about the 1st effect that fear has on us as in our ability to deal with sin, which has been with us from the beginning:

Genesis 3:9-10 ESV

9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” **10** And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”



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Fear is the great wall that keeps us from going to God when we need Him the most. We all sin like Adam, and instead of going to God for Mercy we run and hide and we cover our shame with man-made attempts at reconciliation. Prior to Jesus' resurrection, during the OT, multiple times God tells His people, **"FEAR NOT"; turn to me, confess your sin, I will restore you, I will make a way for you but we would not listen. It took the message of the cross and resurrection together to get our attention.**

Now as we said it not only blocks our ability to confess sin, but **it prevents us living like Christ**, walking into life situations that may be hard, difficult, and sometimes dangerous and yet it may be the path God is calling us to.

The Greek word for fear, found in Mat. 28: 5 & 10, is "Phobos" from which we get our psychiatric word describing irrational fears, "Phobia". Scientists say that this particular fear stems from the same area of the brain, the Obtula Amygdala behind the pituitary gland, whereby we make the decision for **"Fight"** or **"Flight"**. I am going to add a third decision in response to fear to add to this scientific observation, **"Freeze"**. I have encountered even amongst the members of my own family the bewilderment that Phobias can bring and let me tell you I have yet to see "Fight" but I have seen a whole lot of "Flee" or "Freeze". **(Illustrations of paralyzing fear in my family)**

Fear can be paralyzing, which is life threatening when it prevents you from (1) confessing sin and (2) going where God wants you to go. Most of the time our fear is unfounded meaning it's not that you have necessarily encountered that which you are afraid of, it's just the thought of that something may happen to you one day.

- **Most of us in this room have a fear of cancer yet most of us have never dealt with it.**
- **Most of us have a fear of retirement, yet I can count on one hand the people retired in this room.**
- **Most of us have a fear of sharks but no one here is or probably will never live near the ocean.**
- **Most of us have a fear of falling to our deaths but statistically that probably won't happen to anyone in here.**
- **All of us are afraid of dying and yet well no one in here has gone through that.**



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The bottom line is everyone suffers from irrational fear every day, it freezes us from confessing our sin to one another and living for God the way we were intended to. Paul in his encouragement of his young protégé Timothy when he was to lead the church and fend off the wolves in Ephesus was offered this encouragement which is the same encouragement for all of God's people.

2 Timothy 1:7 ESV

⁷for God gave us a spirit **not** of **fear** but of **power** and **love** and **self-control**.

We are not to be a people that jump and attack someone or something every time we get scared. We don't run away from confrontation when it comes calling and we don't freeze and waste an opportunity to reveal God's glory. **No, God's people are to be like Christ when He faced the Cross.** He had the power of the Spirit of God upon Him, by which He controlled His life up to the end, not saying one more word to Pilate or the Sanhedrin than He should of, He endured the shame, humiliation, torture and did not give in until it was time to give up His life. All of that driven by His love for His God and then His love for us. **Church, are you in agreement that Jesus modeled this well for you!?**

This morning I want to declare the Gospel about the glory of the Resurrection and its' power to obliterate FEAR! We all feel it from time to time but fear is never to be taken as something that you live by, it is a feeling, **we don't live by feelings we live by Faith**, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Main Point: Fear must give way to the Empty Tomb!

How does Fear begin to give way?

1. Fear gives way to belief because of the empty tomb.

²And 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. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for **fear** of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be **afraid**, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. **Come, see the place where he lay.**

First off there was two sets of people here that day:



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- There were the guards, who here in our story represents those folks afraid because change just happened.
- Then there are the women who are afraid of the change to come, afraid to lose what Jesus had brought them.

Change is one of the biggest catalysts of fear in people's lives.

The empty tomb tells all people that change is the only constant thing in the world because God is always in the process of redeeming His creation. **The angel says come look, it has all CHANGED!** Jesus' resurrection, the empty tomb tells us that everytime something happens in our lives it does not mean our doom, but it means God is active in your life causing you to reach out to Him, to pray to Him. Prayer is putting your faith in Jesus because you are believing He is raised from the dead that He can help you! **Fear diminishes the more you pray....**

Only a living God can answer your prayers, only a living omniscient God knows the pitfalls you may encounter, only a living omnipresent God can be present when you face fears, only a living omnipotent God can deliver you through the valley of death in this life or deliver you to the next by preserving your faith to the end. **The empty tomb by the belief in it, declares it is time for change and it is time for your fear to give way to it!**

2. Fear gives way to joy because of the empty tomb.

⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and **behold**, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with **fear and great joy**, and ran to tell his disciples.

You see here in the text what it looks like when fear gives way to belief. Their course of action was not, "let's go see if he was right" it was the reaction of people filled with conviction. **They left Him with with fear and joy.** This is actually an example of the good fear of God we all need to have, it refers to the feeling of respect and humility directed toward a divine being, **Jesus had earned and was rewarded with RESPECT!**

I have a couple of observations about this:

First thing is to understand that the path to joy comes first through the fear of disbelief. These ladies could not believe what had happened to their Lord, what the crucifixion had ended. The



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death of their Lord meant that the new freedoms that they had gained with Jesus, in His presence may now be gone. **In those days you have to understand women had no rights, they were viewed as property.** But Jesus viewed them with the worth that God had created them, **their value came not from what they could offer Him but it was placed on them from the one that had everything to offer.** It was through the path of fearing the unknown, not freezing, but giving into the pursuit of closure and facing that grave they did receive the best news of their lives. **Maybe you have a situation in your life you refuse to look at, could it be that the reason you are lacking joy in your life is you just don't want to face truth?**

Secondly, their fear and joy was not because they had seen Him yet, but it was delivered to them out of faith! The belief in the empty tomb, when going through their fear brought them joy. **Joy is the realization that something had changed.** **They were fearful not about possibly not finding Jesus but because they were excited about what type of Jesus they would find.** They had been rewarded with joy from the empty tomb for it put them in the proper view of a Jesus that death could not hold.

Possibly this morning you're frozen because there is some bad news you don't want to hear. There could be some decisions that you know you need to make, some things that need to let go of, **but you are afraid to move because of a "what if" consequence.** But your path, like these ladies, is no different if you want to experience full joy that only comes from knowing that Jesus is near to you and real and that means you have to go through the challenges that seem unpleasant for you. The empty tomb is the promise to you and I that there is a very real and live Jesus waiting for you on the road of life. Are you excited to find him, is there a sense of fear and joy in your heart at what He can do, has he cultivated the proper fear of God in your heart this morning? Then rejoice, for that joy in your heart means that fear has begun to give way in your life.

3. Fear gives way to obedience because of the empty tomb.

⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; **go and tell my brothers** to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

The author, Matthew, is careful to spell out something for us here. This is no Ghost, this is no hallucination, Jesus spoke first, He recognized them first, and they fell down and grabbed His Physical feet, they were rewarded with more joy, more respect, because of their faith. **Their**



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fear gave way first from belief in the empty tomb, their fear shrank way more as joy was increasing from their apprehension over Him, and here it got obliterated because they were rewarded with the Lord's presence. Fear is conquered - God had found His people not hiding in shame but He had flipped the tables and now sinners came running to Him because He had already paid their price for sin. And they are rewarded not with earthly blessings but rewarded with the ability to do what they were created to do - Worship their God! **Your best moment in your life is when you can finally fall at Jesus feet and want nothing else but Him, that's Salvation!**

That's what God wants for all of us! He punished His Son for us so that we can be done with our fear. God slaughtered a lamb on Calvary as He slaughtered an animal in the garden to provide a way to cover our shame and live without fear!

The result of worship and joy is always the same thing OBEDIENCE! As the ladies were at His feet Jesus never stops with directions, "go and tell my brothers".

There is nothing like sharing the joy you have when you are excited about something, it only grows. It is the way we make disciples and it is the way that God fuels our lives for continual resistance against fear. The more you share the less afraid you become.

This morning my people my prayer is that we start becoming a people that are done with the debilitating force of fear in our lives:

- **May fear give way this morning by our belief in the empty tomb, "He is Risen".**
- **May fear give way this morning by Joy over the empty tomb, for He is waiting for you in all your paths of life.**
- **May fear give way this morning by obedience so that our joy may increase in sharing with others what we love the most, our Lord Jesus.**

PRAYER

COMMUNION



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BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father that while we were still living in fear of condemnation condemned His son on the cross in place of us.

Go in the name of the Son that lives destroying our fears and increasing our joy in Him.

Go in the name and power of the HS that helps us to obey and in turn keeps fear at bay by our obedience to the call of mission.