

Where is Jesus?

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[0 : 0 0] Let me add to the welcome that others have given and say a very happy Easter to you all. Now I have a challenge because today the older primary kids, I think from primary four and up, are staying in.

So I'm going to have to try and keep your attention. So at the start my promise is that I'm not going to be any longer than 20 minutes. Hopefully that might help some of the rest of you as well. I've got a timer on. If it beeps at 20 minutes then I'm just going to stop right there and then. That's my promise. I've also got just three key words that I really want you to remember.

As I ask the question, and this is the title of my talk, where is Jesus? Where is Jesus? We've heard a huge amount today about the resurrection of Jesus.

We had that brilliant kids talk with some of the arguments that people bring as to why he didn't really get raised. And we've dealt with all of them. And now we're moving on from Matthew chapter 28 to this really practical question.

[0 : 5 7] So where is Jesus? Let me get some answers. What do you think? Where is Jesus? Sitting at God's right hand.

Yes. I'm going to sit in heaven. In heaven. On a chair. On a chair. Well yes, sitting at God's right hand. Okay. So these answers are not wrong. Okay.

But I'm going to give you some other answers in my three words from Matthew chapter 28 in terms of where is Jesus. I want you to be listening out for these three words. And we'll recap them at the end.

And we'll see if we can all remember them. So Matthew 28. We see people searching for Jesus. They're wondering where Jesus is. And we see two groups of people who are really keen to find Jesus.

And one group that was desperate never to find Jesus. Now it's Easter Sunday mornings. We're not going to spend too long on that one group that didn't want to find them. But you'll see them there in the middle of the passage.

[1 : 5 4] People who should have known better didn't ever want to see Jesus. The chief priests. They were like, right, this is really worrying. People are talking about this tomb being empty. We're going to have to make up some stories here.

And try and make sure that this guy who we thought we'd successfully killed will never again be seen by anyone else. Okay. They were the group who were searching. Well, they were determined that whatever happened, they were not going to find Jesus.

But the other two groups at the start, the first group is a small group. We need to have two women. And then the other group is the group of disciples. They really wanted to see Jesus.

And they were searching. And the trouble was that in the first case, the women, were they going to the right place? Did these women search in the right place?

I'm looking for a bit of audience interaction here. This is intended to be an interactive talk. Did they look in the right place? No. Why not? Why was it the wrong place?

[2 : 5 2] They were searching for the living among the dead. These women searching for Jesus went to a tomb. Why go to a tomb if you're searching for somebody who is very much alive?

They went and searched in the wrong place. I am sure there are many of us here today who want that relationship with Jesus that Florence has just told us about so powerfully.

They want to know forgiveness of sin. They, we, want to know peace with God our Father. We don't want just some sort of vague possibility about life after death.

We want security and an assurance that we are going to go to heaven after we die. And the risk is that some of us might be searching in the wrong place.

Florence, you've told us about various places where you searched and your conviction that ultimately you were searching in the wrong place. These women that were going to a tomb, they were searching in the wrong place for Jesus.

[3 : 55] So it's possible, friends, at Brunsville Evangelical Church, that even coming to church, we could be coming thinking that simply by attending here, we'll be finding Jesus.

And if that's the case, we might be looking in the wrong place too. Because it's not just about coming along to a church and having a nice time and singing a few songs. That's not where we'll necessarily find Jesus.

So we're going to need to explore a little bit more to find out how in Matthew 28 people found Jesus. And I'm going to start off by looking at these disciples.

Do you know what they discovered? And here's the first word in their search for Jesus. They eventually discovered that Jesus was ahead of them. Right? Did you notice this in the passage? And I confess, having read this passage for years and thought about it, and we always read it Eastern, we read about it regularly. I hadn't really focused on the fact that the one thing that's repeated time and again in this passage is that Jesus had gone on ahead of the disciples.

[5 : 10] So in verse 7, the angel seems in a real hurry to tell the woman that Jesus is going ahead and will meet them in Galilee.

And then Jesus meets the woman in verse 10 and again offering them comfort, quickly tells the woman that he's going on ahead to Galilee to see his brothers and that they will meet Jesus there. Why was Jesus going on ahead of them into Galilee? Jesus could have appeared anywhere. He did that with a woman. Bang! He's there.

He had those powers after he was raised from the dead. And it was kind of made it more difficult for the disciples, right? Because they were really frightened. Other accounts tell us that all the disciples wanted to do at this point was lock the door, hide under the table and hope that nobody came to kill them, basically.

And yet the message is, sorry, disciples, if you want to meet with Jesus, if you want an encounter with Jesus, you're going to have to recognize he's gone on ahead. And you're going to have to follow where he's gone.

[6 : 22] You're going to have to get to Galilee because today, disciples, Galilee is the place where Jesus is going to show up. There are two aspects of this that I would like us to tease out this morning.

The significance of Galilee for those disciples and the significance of Jesus continuing to go on ahead of us.

So why Galilee? Well, maybe some of you are going back in your minds and you're thinking about the significance of Galilee in the life of Jesus. You see, in Matthew 5, if you maybe look later at the start of this book, Matthew 5, Jesus, at the beginning of his work, is walking by the Sea of Galilee. And it's there that Jesus sees Peter and Andrew and some of the other disciples to be and says, come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

But that was then. That was three and a half years ago. And these disciples have gone through brilliant times with Jesus, but then they've watched him die. These disciples, locked as they are in the room in fear, think it's all over.

[7 : 34] And the message to the disciples through that angel and through the woman as given to them by Jesus is it's not over. However, you're going to have to go back to where it all started.

Jesus has gone on ahead of you to Galilee. And you're going to have to deal with your fears, get out of that room and get back to Galilee. Galilee, the place where it all started, was this special place where those disciples had to go back.

Jesus would let them know back in Galilee that despite all of their doubts and failure, think of Peter, think of all of his denials, think of the others as they ran away when Jesus was facing his worst moments.

Jesus was going to tell them back in Galilee that it hadn't finished. It was just starting. Back in Galilee, Jesus had gone on ahead and would tell them in this great commission that Georgia read to us about at the end, that they were going to continue their work of telling others about Jesus. That far from him being powerless and dead, now all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to them. They and all the followers of Jesus to come would have a work to do because of the resurrection of Jesus.

[9 : 05] I wonder whether in some ways today Jesus is still going on ahead of us. And whether in some ways today Jesus might be inviting us to follow him perhaps back to what might be a Galilee for us.

Can some of us reflect on really special times in our own walk with Jesus, those of us who have been following him for a while? Moments where we have known him to be close. Moments where we had a real passion in our hearts or fire in our hearts for Jesus. Moments where we were absolutely determined to follow him no matter what it took.

That was Galilee for those disciples where they'd first decided that they were going to follow Jesus. I can think personally of some days where I was a student at Glasgow University, where I'd got involved with a bunch of others in the Christian Union, and I distinctly remember still as about an 18-year-old going off on a retreat to the Lake of Menteith.

And I remember us talking and planning what was going to happen with the Christian Union over the coming years at Glasgow University. And I still remember that sense of absolute intimacy with Jesus.

[10 : 29] That sense that he was meeting us there at the shores, this time not the shores of Galilee, but the shores of the Lake of Menteith. That we were absolutely convinced by his power and by all that he had planned for us.

And as I've reflected this week on the call of the disciples to go back to Galilee, I wonder if some of us this Easter Sunday morning need to get back, maybe it's to a physical place, or maybe more likely it's to a place in our own hearts, where we recapture that passion for Jesus.

That excitement and conviction that he is calling us to do great things in this short time that we have to serve him.

I wonder in what ways Jesus might still be going on ahead of us. Might there be ways this Easter Sunday in which Jesus is still calling us to new places, to new adventures, to leave a life of comfort and safety and predictability.

And he's telling us that he's gone on ahead and our job is to follow him. There are so many references in the Bible, particularly in the Psalms, to the ways in which God constantly goes on ahead of us and challenges us to follow.

[12 : 00] We don't worship a God who just sort of stays still and promises a life of calm predictability. It doesn't seem to be the sort of God that we worship.

Psalms 139 verse 5 says, You go before me and you follow me. Before and behind you place your hand of blessing on my head. As I've been reflecting on this, I have permission from my youngest son to share this story.

As I've been reflecting on this, I've been thinking about a family holiday we've had over the last week. And my youngest son's great temptation, he's embarrassed now, great temptation when we're out walking or in this case cycling, to lag behind.

Distracted. He said himself, distracted by trees, which feel like they are trees that just need to be climbed. And I'm saying, come on, keep up, keep up. We've got somewhere to go. Don't lag behind. And I wonder if in some ways this Easter Sunday morning, Jesus might be saying to me, Paul, keep up.

[13 : 03] Keep up. This Christian life, I'm going places for you. I've got work for you to do. Don't lag behind.

Don't get distracted by the stuff that's around on this path. I'm going on ahead. Take my hand. Stay close. Follow me. In our final song, we will sing these words.

We'll sing about our gaze being transfixed on Jesus' face. We'll sing that with reference to what heaven will be like. But I reckon it's what this life's meant to be like as well.

Jesus, constantly leading us forward. The living one. Great plans for us. Going on ahead. And inviting us to stay close. So, young people, some of you might be rolling eggs down the hill a bit later on.

I see there's lots of boiled eggs there. And I think everybody's welcome to go to the meadows afterwards. And let that egg run on ahead of you. And some of you will go chasing after that egg.

[14 : 06] Because I've seen you do it before. And try and stay as close. See, when you do so, I want to encourage you to think about the way in which Jesus still goes on ahead of us. And encourages us to keep our eyes on him.

And to follow him wherever he may lead. Maybe, for some of us, there are big adventures in this life of faith ahead of us. This week, this month, this year.

The living Jesus challenges us to follow him. But two other words which I think will be really helpful for us. It's not just that he says he's going on ahead.

Second word, he says he is with us. It's there. It was experienced at least in three ways in this passage in Matthew 28.

They were the woman. They did their searching. And they didn't find, first of all. And then suddenly, Jesus appears and is with them. And what do they do? They kneel at his feet.

[15:02] And they worship him. And they enjoy his company. They enjoy the fact that he is with them. And then later, the disciples, as they finally make that journey.

And they get up that hill in Galilee. They discover that Jesus had indeed gone ahead of them. And then they experience the joy of Jesus being with them. And some of them doubt. It wasn't easy for them.

But they experience that joy of Jesus being with them. And then the wonderful promise in the very last verse of Matthew 28. A promise not just to those disciples.

But Brunnsfield's Evangelical Church. A promise to us. A promise to those who will follow him. A promise to those people who even this day are mourning in Sri Lanka.

As many went to worship. And some have lost their lives leaving loved ones bereft. A promise which is for us in the fear and uncertainty and anxiety that some of us experience even today.

[16:02] I know some are battling with ill health. Are battling with heartaches. Are battling with uncertainties about the future. With concerns about family.

With concerns about money. In which case, here's the promise from Jesus this Easter Sunday. Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

He goes ahead. He leads us on. He also promises that he is with us. Today and every day. His name is Emmanuel.

Which means God with us. And finally. And this gets into really quite profound truth. About the Jesus whom we serve.

He's not only the one who leads us on and goes on ahead. He's not only the one who is with us. But he is also the one who is in us.

[17:02] If this day we are willing to accept him. Have you heard the phrase asking Jesus into your heart? It's maybe a phrase which we don't use so much.

Maybe sometimes it's seen as almost slightly glib and superficial. But yet as I've thought today. Where is Jesus? The reality this Easter Sunday.

Is that Jesus wants to come in to us. Where do I get this from? Colossians chapter 1 verse 27 says this. God has chosen to make known the glorious riches of this mystery.

Which is Christ in you. The hope of glory. Ephesians chapter 3 verse 17. Paul's prayer was that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Now I don't want in any way to dismiss it as something which is simply about praying a one-off prayer.

[18:06] Saying Jesus please come into my heart. And then that's it. If you've never prayed that prayer. Then maybe today is the day. This resurrection Sunday. Where you can indeed pray that prayer.

Inviting Jesus in. Inviting him to take his place as your saviour and your Lord. But for all of us.

Whether we've come here not sure if we're Christians. Or whether we've been Christians for many, many years. Today is a day. Where I'd invite us to pause. And invite Jesus in.

He's the one who says that he wants to dwell in our hearts. Not just a character who we know about.

Not just arguments that we have with others who might not believe. But a person who promises to always go ahead. To always be with us.

[19:05] And who wants to come into our hearts. We're at 19 minutes. So I'm going to suggest we pause. And just take a few moments to reflect on what we've heard.

And maybe some of you want to pray your own prayer. As you think about what Jesus. The living Jesus. Has to say to you. And do for you.

Today. Let's pray. Lord Jesus help us to follow you. Wherever you want us to go. Help us to know the truth.

Of you being with us. Whatever challenges we face. Help us to live in the reality.
Of you Jesus Christ. Dwelling in our hearts. May these truths. Change us.
[20 : 08] And may they help us. To be people who continue to live out this great commission. Of
going into all the world.
Of proclaiming the good news about Jesus. Of baptising others. And teaching others to obey you.
Thank you Lord Jesus.
That you're alive. We worship you this day. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Thank you. A prayer. Amen.