**Calvary Fellowship 4.9.2023 Matthew 28:1-10 “Raised to Life”**

* **So I moved to Miami from Boston right before my 14th birthday**
* And my family threw me a little party & someone in my family bought me a really nice gold chain for my 14th birthday - I mean really nice - in fact, too nice
* Now, we all understand this around Christmas b/c we’re buying gifts & U don’t buy a really nice gold chain to someone U barely know
* And we’re Cuban, so U know how that is - these are people that aren’t really your aunt & uncle - they’re just friends that your parents had from Cuba
* But either way they bought me this thick gold chain & I just figured they were rich but they kept it low key by dressing like they were close to being homeless
* So I wore my gold chain w/ my shirt open as I rocked my Edwin jeans to school
* I already had a smaller gold chain that I wore all the time, so I kept this 1 on too
* So I had this whole Miami Vice slash pimp thing going on
* But then I noticed something & thought I as getting sick b/c my entire neck started to turn green - it looked like I was slowly turning into the Incredible Hulk
* I showed my mom & she told me the sad truth that my super cool gold chain wasn’t real gold - it was fake
* That’s when I learned about how they sell fake gold chains by the yard
* I thought they spent $400-$500 on my chain & it turned out they spent $4-$5
* It was only when real life interacted w/ it that we found out if it was genuine or not - That’s the way it works w/ everything in life
* It hurts us when things that were supposed to be real turn out to be fake
* **Some of us fall in love & we thought it was real, only to find that the other person didn’t feel the same way - it makes us wonder if anything is real**
* Some of us invest in friendships b/c we thought it was real but found out they were just using us - it makes us wonder if anything is real
* Some of us have had people who made us promises, only to find they broke the promise - & it makes us hesitant to trust people again
* Everything looked real, felt real, seemed real, but in reality, it was all fake
* All of us have had moments where we’ve been disillusioned - sometimes even in our faith - we prayed, but the answer we got wasn’t what we were looking for
* We did the right thing & things didn’t work out the way we hoped
* **That’s why I love Easter - b/c most people think Easter is only for people who believe - who believe in Jesus & believe in the resurrection**
* But here’s what U find when U read the accounts of the Easter story - no 1 believed at 1st - everyone was sorrowful at Jesus’ death
* His disciples were afraid they were next, so they were in hiding
* The people who listened to Jesus’ teaching thought Jesus could have been the Messiah, but He was killed so that ended that possibility
* The women who followed Jesus wanted to believe, but seeing Him get crucified before their very eyes was too much to handle even for them
* This is why Easter is a message of hope - b/c not everyone starts out believing
* In fact, just the opposite - listen, on that 1st Easter Sunday, nobody was expecting no body - we know the story & we’re spoiled by that
* But after that gruesome crucifixion & death, nobody was expecting no body
* Then they come into contact w/ the Risen Jesus & they were never the same…

**———(v. 1-10)———**

**#1 - Jesus wants to Transform My Internal Reality**

* **1 of the challenges we have on Easter is we all starting in a different place**
* Some of us who believe the resurrection took place, but it doesn’t change anything in my day to day life
* Others of us think the idea is nice, but it probably didn’t happen
* Your family offered to buy U brunch if U attended & you’re just here for the food
* Still others believe the resurrection did happen & that fact changes everything
* **So we’re all starting from a different place - but I want us all to get on the same page b/c the reason we’re all here is b/c something happened**
* The 1st person to the tomb is Mary Magdalene, according to the Bible she was a person who was healed of demon possession
* Now, whatever U believe about that - maybe U think it was a chemical imbalance or some kind of social disorder - whatever it is, she wasn’t well
* People that were considered demon possessed - they lived outdoors
* They talked to themselves & walked the streets 1/2 clothed - that was her existence & she had an encounter w/ Jesus that transformed her life
* **Now if you’re trying to cook up a story in the 1st century to start Christianity, U wouldn’t have Mary be the 1st person to see Jesus**
* Why? B/c the culture wouldn’t accept it - truth be told, the fact that women were the 1st people to see Jesus after the resurrection hurt Christianity early on
* In fact, a Greek philosopher named Celsus, who lived about 80 years Jesus, hated Christianity & wrote many attacks on Christianity (pics)
* Here was his most famous: “How can anyone expect rational men to listen to the testimony of a hysterical female?”
* This culture did not value women the way Jesus valued women - In the ancient world, women were not only not equal to men, they were not even allowed to testify in court - women had zero standing culturally
* Jesus, in contrast, allowed women to be His disciples - He allowed women to participate in His ministry - that was unheard of in that culture
* And the NT writers wrote that women & men had equal standing before God
* That was absolutely shocking stuff in that culture - no 1 has done more for the cause of women than Jesus of Nazareth
* “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28)
* **So why write that Mary was the 1st person to see Jesus?**
* Modern historians say, “If U were inventing a story about Jesus in 1st century, you’d never put the testimony of women b/c that would hurt the message.”
* They conclude, “The only plausible reason why women were in the Gospel accounts is b/c it actually happened" - b/c that’s the why it actually went down
* **So Mary goes to the tomb, not b/c she thought it was going to be empty**
* Just the opposite-she just wanted to be there for the 1 who had changed her life
* “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, ‘Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?’” (Mark 16:1-3 NIV)
* **But there’s another reason - b/c these women were hurting, Jesus didn’t them to hear the news 2nd hand**
* **When my wife & I found out we were pregnant w/ our 3rd child, we decided not to tell anyone**
* We wanted to wait until she was 12 weeks along before telling our family
* That made sense to me, so I kept my mouth shut
* We went to Publix that day to pick up some groceries & while we’re at the deli, the person says, “How are U today?” - “Great b/c I’m pregnant!”
* I look her & say, “Hey, throttle it back. Remember what we talked about.”
* Then we get to the check out line & the girl says, “How are U?” - She says, “I’m good…b/c I’m pregnant!” - Then she told the bagger that she was pregnant
* Her & I have this conversation & I say, “I can’t tell my parents you’re pregnant, but somehow the guy that was cutting the provolone needed to know.”
* **The reality is, Mary was at the tomb to put spices on Jesus’ dead body**
* And they're told to let the disciples know that He has risen
* My friends, there is no 1 who can transform a life like Jesus - and if he can take a women like Mary who had all kinds of problems, He can turn your life around
* The reality is, your transformation isn’t found in your past & who U used to be
* But some of us won’t let go of the pain, the failures, or the hurts of the past
* Once Mary encountered Jesus, she was no longer the person she used to be
* That person was gone & the new Mary arrived once she gave her life to Jesus
* “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
* That’s the promise for every person if we’re willing to come to Him
* Every day that she lived a normal life she remembered what her life had been previously & that Jesus was the 1 who changed everything

**#2 - Jesus wants to Transform My External Understanding**

* **Now I’m a guy who loves to tell stories - I also like messing around, so sometimes I’ll tell my kids stories about things that never happened**
* **So I try to walk 3 miles a day - a while back I was walking in my old neighborhood & these 3 geese tried to attack me**
* They started yelling, “Aflack” or what they yell & they both started chasing me & flying to attack me - I started running like the wind to escape them
* And amazingly, I outran them -I was on phone w/ a friend & he said,“Are U ok?”
* I said, “Yeah. I’m great. I had no idea I still had that much speed in me.”
* Later I learned that geese can fly up to 40 MPH - what does that mean?
* It means I can run 41 MPH - Well, my family didn’t believe that happened
* **So a few weeks later I’m out walking w/ my 9-year old daughter**
* She was the only 1 who believed me - how do I know that? B/c she brought a Nerf gun w/ her - As we’re walking, the geese tried to attack - but we ran away & evaded those demon possessed geese
* Still there were scoffers who didn’t believe - until 1 day when my wife went outside & the geese tried to attack 1 of her friends who stopped by
* Then she took a broom & started swinging - I know this b/c instead of helping, my daughter Mia video taped the entire incident
* So U don’t have to take my words for it - I have outside verification
* **So here’s the question - how do we know that story happened?**
* There are 2 eyewitnesses who were there who testify that it happened
* We have the same thing - the NT docs are the most verified docs in history
* “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)
* **Peter is writing from an eyewitness perspective saying, “What we believe isn’t a fable. It really happened b/c I saw it.”**
* 1 of the things that separates Christianity from any other world religion is the eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Jesus
* The NT writers were people who had seen Jesus crucified, saw Jesus resurrected, & wrote the story down so we could believe as well
* “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-8 NKJV)
* Paul says, “The resurrection happened b/c the Scriptures foretold that it would”
* That means it was understood prophetically that it would happen
* But then he talks about the eyewitness testimony of people who saw Jesus after the resurrection
* **First, he mentions Cephas or Peter** - why mention Peter? B/c Peter was a well known disciple of Jesus & Peter was publicly beaten for his faith
* So he had every opportunity to recant his faith & spare himself the beatings
* **2nd, He appeared to the 12** - those would be the 12 main disciples of Jesus
* **3rd, Jesus appeared to over 500 brethren at once**
* Listen, even the most ardent skeptics of Christianity date the writing of 1 Corinthians to just a few years after the resurrection
* Meaning that most of the people who saw Jesus alive were still alive themselves - that’s why skeptics don’t dispute the resurrection
* Instead, they come up w/ alternative theories as to what happened
* So they say that people saw Jesus after His crucifixion b/c they were all experiencing a mass hallucination
* The problem is, hallucinations don’t happen to masses of people - they happen to individuals, so a mass hallucination would itself be a miracle if it happened
* And U might say, “Well, a resurrection is a miracle too. So maybe I believe that there was a man hallucination.” - well, U can, but there’s another problem
* B/c Jesus didn’t appear 1 time - He appeared to the women at the tomb, to those 500 people, to the 12 disciples, & to other people individually
* You’re betting on a lot of mass hallucinations that are all seeing the same thing
* It starts to be less likely that the mass hallucination theory works
* **4th, He was seen by James - this is James the 1/2 brother of Jesus**
* If U aren’t aware, Joseph & Mary had kids after Jesus was born & those brothers were not that enthusiastic about Jesus’ Messianic ideas
* In fact, they thought He was nuts & at times were antagonistic about it
* “One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn’t even find time to eat. When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. ‘He’s out of his mind,’ they said.” (Mark 3:20-21)
* How many of U have a brother? What would it take for U to believe your brother was the son of God? I’m guessing it would take more than a conversation
* **A few years ago, my brother was at a conference in NH & a guy walks up & says, “Billy Franquiz. Are U related to Pastor Bob Franquiz the author?”**
* My brother says, “Yes” - The guy starts going on & on about how much he likes my books & how he subscribes to our podcast & he’s been to 1 of my events for pastors & church leaders & how much I’ve blessed his life
* So he moves on & another guy walks up to him & says, “Franquiz. Any relation to Bob Franquiz?” - He says, “Yes. That’s my brother.” - The guy says, “Your brother’s books have been such a blessing.” - My brother walks away mid-sentence - a 3rd guy walks ups to him & says, “Franquiz. Any relation…”
* My brother says, “Yes, he’s my brother. But I grew up w/ him & he’s not that awesome!” - Nothing U can do about that - haters gonna hate
* **Listen, after the resurrection, even Jesus’ brother believed b/c the evidence was incontrovertible & they saw Him alive after He had died**
* What we just read in verse 3-4, Paul is quoting a Christian Creed in existence in the Christian community - a Creed is a carefully crafted statement
* The early Christian community & the Jewish community did the same thing
* They’d craft statements to make sure that every generation said & understood the same thing about their faith & repeated it the same way for generations
* By the time the Apostle Paul is writing this letter, there had already been a creed established around the resurrection of Jesus b/c the Christian church in Jerusalem embraced it immediately - Not eventually
* B/c that’s 1 of things skeptics say, that the resurrection developed over years
* Not the case-they embraced it immediately b/c the eyewitnesses were still alive
* That’s why Paul lists their names & says, “Go talk to them”
* Here’s why this is important - b/c U can believe a fact is true & it not change your life - we landed on the moon, but that’s impacting your life
* **Maybe U believe essential oils are really a thing - U know, I was having a conversion the other day w/ someone about essential oils**
* I told them that essential oils is just marketing - they didn’t believe me
* I said, “Can U name some non-essential oils?” - No b/c marketing is what puts the essential in essential oils - b/c if they were called “Take it or leave it” oils, I think it would impact sales
* That’s like at home I make what is known as a World Famous Grilled Cheese
* So what makes it world famous? Marketing - it’s bread & cheese
* But simply believe the resurrection happened doesn’t change your life
* It’s believing in Jesus & trusting in Jesus that changes your life
* That’s why in the Matthew passage, the angel rolls away the stone & is sitting on top of it - why? He didn’t need the angel to let Him out
* After the resurrection Jesus appears to the disciples in locked rooms
* So it wasn’t about letting Him out - it was about people being able to look inside & see that He wasn’t there - they were able to examine it
* Listen, Christianity is the thinking man’s faith - b/c it invites us to investigate so we can discover the truth & that truth can set us free

**#3 - Jesus wants to Transform My Future Possibilities**

* **But here’s what I think the deeper question is - “What difference does it make?” Why does the resurrection matter? How does it impact my life?**
* Paul, who wrote 1st Corinthians that we read earlier, he knew there difference it made - Paul hated Christians - he persecuted & killed Christians
* But he had an experience w/ the risen Jesus that changed him forever
* The guy who was the most likely person not to convert to Christianity had became its’ spokesperson
* Christianity flips the script b/c God calls unlikely people to do amazing things
* “Well, that sounds good, but I can’t believe the resurrection & Christianity.”
* “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.” (Matthew 28:16-17 NKJV)
* **I mean, if we were trying to make stuff up, who adds that some doubted?**
* A couple of guys see Jesus & they’re thinking, ‘Am I on something? Did I eat the wrong berries on my way here? Is it 420?”
* And some will say, “Well, people were just gullible back then.”
* Sorry that doesn’t work - CS Lewis calls that “Chronological snobbery”
* Somehow thinking that b/c they’re older & we’re newer, then we’re smarter
* I’m sorry to tell U this, but IQ’s haven’t gone up - they’re about the same
* Here’s my point - whatever your doubts are, U might say, “I need evidence to believe.” - Their doubts were just as strong as yours & they started believing
* They believed so much that all of them died a martyr’s death & never recanted
* **But there’s nothing wrong w/ having questions or doubts as long as we don’t use them to create a barrier to keep us from God**
* Over the years people have told the reasons why they don’t believe & they share their doubts about believing - sometimes the questions are legitimate
* Other times, the questions are just smokescreens for not wanting to change
* Here’s my philosophy - Instead of having faith in your doubt, believe your beliefs & doubt your doubts - it’s a much better way to live
* **B/c here’s the reality - U can have all kinds of questions about the Bible**
* U can have doubts & questions - every thinking person has questions
* But let me simplify it for U - for Christianity to be true, only 1 thing needs to be true - and that is the resurrection - the resurrection is the crux of Christianity
* That’s why the apostles didn’t set out to answer every random question about the OT - instead, they preached the resurrection of Jesus
* And the resurrection is about rising from death to life
* **So here’s my question to U - do U want to be rise & be free?**
* God wants to set U free from the things that are holding U back & holding U down - He wants to change your life starting right now
* All it takes is for U to open up your heart to Him
* U might be saying to yourself, “I’m not into God” - well, guess what? He’s into U
* I can tell U that b/v that was my story - I wasn’t looking for God - but I’m so grateful He was looking for me
* **Listen - Jesus rose from the dead so your life could be forgiven & changed - So maybe it’s time for U to rise**
* Rise above your past - rise above your failures - rise above your pain
* Rise above your guilt - rise above your fear - rise above your doubt
* It’s time to rise from who U used to be & enter into the life God has for U
* God wants to take your life & transform it - and that begins w/ forgiveness
* So I’m going to invite U to rise & meet me at the front of this stage as U take a step in God’s direction…