

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 20 April 2025

Sermon Title : Make Room for Jesus

Speaker : Rev Kenneth Huang

Text : Matthew 28:1-10

INTRODUCTION

The FMC Creative Team presented a skit on 3 different responses to Jesus' death and resurrection (Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wawjC4qW9x0>):

The Centurion – A Gentile, declared unashamedly regarding Jesus, “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54). He made a confession about Jesus that all of us must also make. Those who already know Jesus as the Son of God should confess Jesus so that others will come to know who Jesus is.

Peter – Struggled with himself for denying Jesus 3 times, knowing he failed Jesus. But before we judge Peter, we are reminded that we too have denied Jesus in our lives. Maybe not so publicly as Peter had done, but we deny Jesus whenever we are too afraid or too ashamed to be identified as Christians or fail to speak of Jesus to our loved ones, friends, classmates, colleagues. Jesus gives us second chances as we honestly confess our sins and humbly allow Him to correct and restore us, just as He did for Peter (see John 21).

Mary Magdalene – Testified that she was met and spoken to by the Risen Lord Jesus Himself when she was crying and feeling lost, when she was alone and in despair. The Risen Lord Jesus came to her when it mattered most. No wonder, it is recorded in John 20:18, that in response to meeting Jesus, “Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: ‘I have seen the Lord!’”

2 key questions arise today that need to be answered:

1. Did Jesus, who died on the cross, really rise from the dead?

The Biblical witness is Jesus did rise from the dead – that He did conquer death and rose to live again, leaving the tomb empty. This has been the consistent and faithful witness of Christianity the last 2000 years. Consistent with His own words that He is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25), *Jesus lives again to never die again*. And so, at the heart of Easter is the truth that Jesus is alive for He rose from the dead.

- The fact that Jesus resurrected from the dead is so important because it forms the very basis of the truth of Christianity. Paul the Apostle in fact said that if Jesus was not resurrected, our faith in Him is futile, is in vain, and we are still living in sin (1 Cor 15:13–14, 17). What a terrible hopeless existence to have if Jesus was not

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resurrected, for it would mean that we are living a lie, still in our sins, and still doomed for hell.

- Praise God that Jesus did resurrect and rise up from the dead, leaving the tomb empty. Matthew 28:5-6 affirmed this truth: “But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. *He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.*” The tomb, where Jesus’ dead body was laid, was empty! For Jesus had indeed risen from the dead and is alive forever! That is the witness of the Bible, the cornerstone of our Christian Faith.
- Sadly, many have tried over the ages, in futility, to debunk the truth that Jesus rose from the dead by arguing:

(i) The Swoon (aka Peng-San) Theory

This is the theory that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, and that when He was laid in the tomb, He was just badly injured. The theory postulates that the coolness of the tomb somehow helped Jesus recover so much so that He was able to roll away the extremely heavy stone covering the entrance of the tomb, to next overpower the Roman guards and then, shortly after, appear to His disciples. *But* not as One resurrected from the dead, but only as One who somehow managed to quickly recover from His very extensive injuries, which we will remember resulted from the flogging and beating He received, the terrible nailing onto the cross, the cruel hanging on a wooden cross, and finally, the piercing of His side with a spear, as stated in the Gospels.

The swoon theory just does not hold water at all – for how in the world could someone, as badly beaten and injured as Jesus was, recover so quickly and do all as He was alleged to have done? It is clear that Jesus did die on the cross, and when He was laid in the tomb, He was dead. But on the third day, He resurrected and hence, the empty tomb. So, the swoon theory is itself debunked!

(ii) (a) Hallucination / (b) Deception

There are still others, while they accept that Jesus did die, they argue that Jesus did not rise from the dead and that the stories about His resurrection were either a result of hallucination suffered by those who said they had seen Jesus, or a result of an elaborate deception by the apostles.

It could not have been a hallucination (which normally happens only at a limited location and for a limited time) because so many people met the Risen Lord at different situations, places and times. The Apostle Paul personally affirmed in 1 Cor 15:5-8, “and that [Jesus] appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the

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apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”

The resurrection of Jesus was therefore not a hallucination.

It was also not a deception by the apostles, because it would have been extremely difficult to keep the story of the Resurrected Jesus consistent over time. It would equally have been very hard to believe that the disciples would be willing to put their lives at risk, and to even die, for a lie.

In fact, on the contrary, because the resurrection of Jesus was and is true, the Apostle Paul asserted, “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures”. (1 Cor 15:3-4). So, to the question “Did Jesus, who died a most torturous death on the cross, really rise from the dead?”, the answer is a definite “Yes!”

2. If He did so rise or resurrect, what are the implications for everyone – for those already His disciples, and for those who are not yet so?

(A) For those who are already His disciples

We must be and do as Mary Magdalene was and did – *she “went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’” (John 20:18).*

Today, *it is our turn and responsibility to tell others* that Jesus is the Risen Lord, and that only He can forgive sins and give salvation to all those who trust in Him. We are to tell others that only in Jesus are we able us to live lives that are a blessing to others, and live lives with real meaning and purpose: the abundant life He promised in John 10:10.

We must share that Jesus is the only one who can truly help us with all of the challenges we face in our daily lives, that take their toll on us, because the effects of sin. The challenges we face can be summarised under 4 “Fs” which are:

- a) **FATIGUE** – due to our stressful lifestyle of chasing after possessions, prestige or pleasure, making us physically weary, emotionally empty, spiritually dry.
- b) **FAILURE** – due to us feeling that we are not making as significant an impact with our lives as we know should, despite all our best efforts because we fail to live by God’s values.
- c) **FRICTION** – due to when our relationships with others become strained or broken due to pride and failure to consider the needs of others over our own, leading to us feeling discouraged and lonely.
- d) **FOLLY** – due to our sinful disregard of God’s truth and ways as a result of our prideful insistence on our own ways as the way to enjoy life or to get things done.

If we are experiencing any of the 4 “Fs”, we can take heart and put our trust in the Risen Jesus. We do this when we seek Him humbly, rely on Him fully, and dedicate your life afresh to Him unreservedly. And as we do so, whenever we experience:

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- a) **FATIGUE** – Jesus will give us His **GRACE** daily to enable us
- b) **FAILURE** – Jesus will give us His **HOPE** daily to encourage us
- c) **FRICITION** – Jesus will give us His **PEACE** daily to guard us
- d) **FOLLY** – Jesus will give us His **LOVE** daily to forgive us

Warning: If we do not take and put our trust in Jesus whenever we face our 4 “Fs”, we will start to doubt Jesus and, slowly but surely, either slacken in our wholehearted commitment to Him or worse still, stop believing that Jesus is relevant to our modern, fast-paced, relativist, sceptical world. And as a result, we start living lukewarm, half-hearted lives as Christian that give a bad name to Jesus. God forbid that we do.

(B) For those who have fallen or failed Jesus

We need, all the more, to take heart and put our trust in Jesus if we have fallen and failed Him, as Peter did by denying Him. Let us remember that Jesus will always give us a 2nd chance – but we must humbly confess our sins and willingly let Him correct and restore us, just as He did Peter!

(C) For those who have yet to trust in and invite Jesus into our lives

Today is a good day to “die to self” – that is, admit we are sinful and need the forgiveness of God – and then to rise to have real life in Jesus – life that only God in the Risen Jesus can give to us as the Holy Spirit comes into our lives and starts changing us from a person living apart from God to a person made a member of the family of God.

CONCLUSION

We need to ***make room for Jesus*** in our lives! We must, if we are to live lives as we should. The Centurion did, Peter did, Mary Magdalene did! Will you and I do so also? ***We must!***

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God’s truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
- 2. Which of the characters in the skit (the Centurion, Peter or Mary Magdalene) do you identify with the most, in your response to Jesus’ death and resurrection?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Appoint someone to read Matthew 28:1-10 slowly.
 - a. Do you truly believe in Jesus' resurrection? Why or why not?
 - b. What is one thing you can do to strengthen your belief?
 - c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3b above?
 - d. Have you been actively sharing the Good News of the Risen Jesus with others? If not, why? If so, why?

4. When was the last time you denied Jesus by being too afraid or ashamed to be identified as a Christian?
 - a. What was your reason for denying Jesus?
 - b. As a group, discuss which of the following, for example, Bible study plan, books or other resources and courses, seminars, conferences or events in Faith Methodist Church or outside, can help you to boldly identify as a Christian. With a prayer partner, seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on which of these or any other help, you can turn to, to increase your boldness in identifying as a Christian and then share about Jesus unreservedly.

5. Are you facing any of the 4 "Fs", i.e. Fatigue, Failure, Friction and Folly today?

Share one challenge you are facing and pause to pray for one another for Jesus' grace to enable you, His hope to encourage you, His peace to guard you and His love to forgive you.

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

6. Share your personal encounter with Jesus that proves to you that Jesus is alive.

OR

Give thanks to God for the abundant life we can have because Jesus died and rose again, and Jesus will always give us a 2nd chance when we humbly confess our sins and willingly let Him correct and restore us, just as He did Peter.

7. Pray that Jesus will help every member in your group to overcome challenges that:
 - i. affect your relationship with Him,
 - ii. stop you from identifying as a Christian; or
 - iii. stop you from sharing the gospel.

Pray also for the Holy Spirit to lead you to pre-believers that God has prepared for you to share the Good News of Jesus. As you hear from God, list down the names of the pre-believers and commit to pray for them on a regular basis, and to boldly share with them.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Living hope - Phil Wickham
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven
2. All Hail King Jesus - Bethel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eu5Rx2E4W8&ab_channel=BethelMusic
3. Because He Lives https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjJm86-pSpo&ab_channel=FAITH%26GRACE

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