

**RAISED TO LIFE**  
**We are Raised and Sent**  
**Matt 28:1-20**  
**April 1, 2018**  
**Easter**

It's Easter morning. It's a morning to dress up, to get some photos of the kids, to smell the flowers in bloom, and to get together as a family and...eat. There are beautiful pastels, and egg hunts, and chocolate bunnies, and the grass stuff you put in the Easter baskets. It's Easter morning and for over 2000 years the Church, Christians, believers in Jesus as the Messiah – have celebrated on this morning because of the life change that has happened. Some people get up really early on Easter morning just to shout out some praise with the first rays of day light, right. Some people go to church on Easter who don't normally go to church just because it's Easter, right. And the word people have been shouting out on Easter morning is hallelujah. Can you say that word...hallelujah? Right...that's the word that people have been saying because on this day we recognize that everything has changed. The world as we know it has changed. The afterlife, as we knew it, changed forever. And because everything changed people have been shouting hallelujah.

And if we we're going to try to do Easter a little bit better and live like Easter people then we need to understand Halleluiah as it is in *Hebrew* or Alleluia as it is in *Greek* a little better. The word halleluiah, if we break it down, simply means "praise the Lord." It is the joining together of the words praise – *halle*, and the – *lu*, and Jah which is short for *Yahweh* – one of the words used for the Lord. Hallelujah...praise the Lord. And on Easter morning people have been shouting this word long enough and loud enough that most of the world stops all that it's doing and recognizes this day as a Holy day. Easter morning...here it is so just do me a favor and say hallelujah.

But, there is another word that is just as powerful and just as life changing as a hallelujah. The word is "therefore" and it's a word of confirmation and validation. It is a word that says: because and from now on at the same time.

So, let's go back to the first Easter before the hallelujah was spoken like it's spoken today and when the "therefore" took on a brand-new meaning. Because, you see, hallelujah is an ancient word – it was around long before the first Easter – but, on Easter morning it takes on a new meaning. On that first morning when the hallelujah was transformed and the "therefore" steps up is when everything changed. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 28. We are going to read the entire chapter, all 20 verses so hold on, hang in there because this one chapter takes us from the early morning and an empty grave to a mountain top and a great commission.

[Read Passage – Matthew 28:1-20]

So, let's take a moment to walk through the things that are happening in this one chapter. It starts out on what is the very first Easter. There are no egg hunts, there is no Hershey's chocolate bunnies, there are no Cadbury eggs, there's none of that kind of stuff. Instead, there is an earth quake...a violent earth quake that was caused by an angel who had come down from heaven and rolled back the stone. I love angels...because angels get to do some of the most awesome things. In the Old Testament, it's an angel who makes a donkey talk and an angel in armor who confronts King David when his life is off course. In the New Testament it's an angel who tells Mary she is going to be the mother of Jesus, it's an angel who tells the shepherd's that Jesus is born, it's an angel who walks the Apostle Peter out of prison, so no one can see them. And the Easter angel (or angels, Mark and Matthew say there is one but, Luke and John tell us that there were two – don't get distracted by the numbers, the point of the story is not how many but that the tomb is empty...right) rolls the stone away and then it says he kicks back and sits on the stone...like, yeah – I did that. His clothes are so brilliant and his power so intense that the guards, these big strong Roman soldiers pass out, they shook with fear and fell out. Isn't it true that just when we think we are big and strong and we've got all we need – God can send an angel and rock our worlds. Don't you love it.

Now, the angel knows that he is a bit intimidating, so he says to the women who had gotten up early that morning and made their way to the cemetery to see the tomb, he says – don't be afraid. He has already caused so much fear in the hearts of the guards that they've passed out cold. But, he tells these women what has happened. He tells them what heaven has already known and what all of creation has been waiting for. The angel tells them the words that will change how death is seen from that moment on into eternity. He tells them a part of God's divine plan that was put into motion all the way back in the Garden of Eden. The angel tells them what we all long to and need to hear...he tells them that the tomb is empty, that Jesus is not here; he is risen. That resurrection is not an event but a person...Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life. Death is conquered, and the King has the keys to death and hell. HALLELUJAH.

The angel is like, look, look, he's not here. See where he was laying, he's not here. He is back to life just like he said he would be. Those women saw him laying there, dead. They knew that there was no life left in the body that had been put into the tomb, laid on that slab. So, he takes them inside the tomb and says see...how many of us here today need to be reminded that he is not laying there on that slab, in that tomb...that the grave is empty. How many of us here today have been going through some thing and we started thinking that maybe Jesus is still dead, that the stories are all wrong, that if he was alive - life would be different. Who here today needs to hear that the tomb is empty and that the One who swore he would come back from the dead has done what he promised. And he did it so that you would know that not only is he alive but that you too can be raised to life.

I have been in what is called the Garden Tomb in the modern city of Jerusalem. On the way out of the tomb is this sign...look at what it says. Say it with me, "He is not here, for he is risen." Hallelujah. Easter is about an empty tomb that brings all of us the hope that life does not have to be empty or hopeless but filled up and full. Jesus says to us that he is the victor...that he has won and there is nothing that can change that truth.

Look at the middle part of this chapter. It says that the guards were paid to lie about the resurrection. They were told to fabricate a story that the disciples came while they were sleeping and took Jesus. The only way that the world around us can live without Jesus is to believe the lie. The only way to live without Jesus is to be convinced that Easter never happened, that dead people don't come back to life, and that God does not love the world enough to give his one and only Son. It says in verse 15 that this story has been around to this very day. We know people who have bought the lie, modern day people, I'm not talking about the guards...I'm talking about people we know, right now. They either find it too hard to believe and so they would rather buy the lie or they love the darkness of the sealed-up tomb because they are people of darkness. They do what they want because they believe that darkness rules the day. But, the angel rolled that stone away, the Truth has stepped out of the darkness and brought the light and we either buy the lie and live in darkness or we love the light and live the truth, those are the options my friends.

It's Easter morning and we're not done yet. Can I tell you what comes next because the resurrection comes with a mandate? The angel says it to the women and the resurrected Jesus says it to his disciples. The is where the "therefore" comes in, the mandate is this...we are to go and tell other people what we have seen. You see, as far as the angel and Jesus are concerned, there's no way you can see this, or feel this love God has for us and keep it to yourself. I find it confirming that the angel and Jesus are on the same page, right. Both of them send witnesses to the resurrection out into the world to tell others what has happened. Both of them send witnesses into the world to proclaim that death has been defeated, the tomb is empty, the afterlife is not a holding tank, and that Jesus is alive forever more. We are called to live the truth. Say it with me, hallelujah - therefore.

Because the tomb is empty, because Jesus is King, because all power and authority has been given to Jesus...therefore. And so, the angel at the tomb sends the women to tell the disciples and Jesus on the mountain top tells the disciples to go into all the world. Because this message comes with this other word... "therefore." It says in verse 17 that some of the disciples were still doubting. These are first hand witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus and they still had questions. You see, some of us here today are Easter people, for the most part. For the most part because we have some doubts. Our faith in Jesus gets us to Easter morning and the Halleluiah but, the brakes come slamming on when you hear the angel tell the women to go tell the disciples and the therefore comes up. But the angel gives the task of witnessing to the resurrection to these women before anyone else. These two women are given the weight of

the message of the resurrection to share with a bunch of men who were afraid, and scared, and wondering what was going to happen now that their leader was dead. Then those same women run into Jesus and Jesus tells them to go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and they will see me (Matt 28:10). I'm not sure that one of the Easter miracles isn't that those men actually listened to those women and did what they told them to do.

When Jesus is standing on the mountain top with his disciples and he tells them that he, by the power that rose him from the dead, he is now commissioning those who know him, those who believe in him, those who trust him, those who have faith in him "therefore" to go into every part of the world and tell everyone else about him. The "therefore" found in Matthew 28:19 is Jesus' way of saying to all of us that because of what he has done, we can...because of who he is, we are...because of his victory, we win...because of his authority, we live...out loud every day. And not just tell them but teach them about him in such a way that they become followers too. To wake up every morning knowing that God has brought us a new day and "therefore," to live another day in such a way that people can see Jesus because of the "therefore" that is calling all of us to be Easter people this morning.

And his promise...is he will be with us forever...that we don't go alone. That the one who rose from the grave is inside of us, opening the tomb of our heart, setting us free from the darkness and calling us to be his light in the world we live in...therefore, will you do that? Will you be one of his disciples today. It's Easter. Will your hallelujah be a proclamation and a call to action for you today to live as one of his witnesses? Will you start living into the therefore God has called you to?