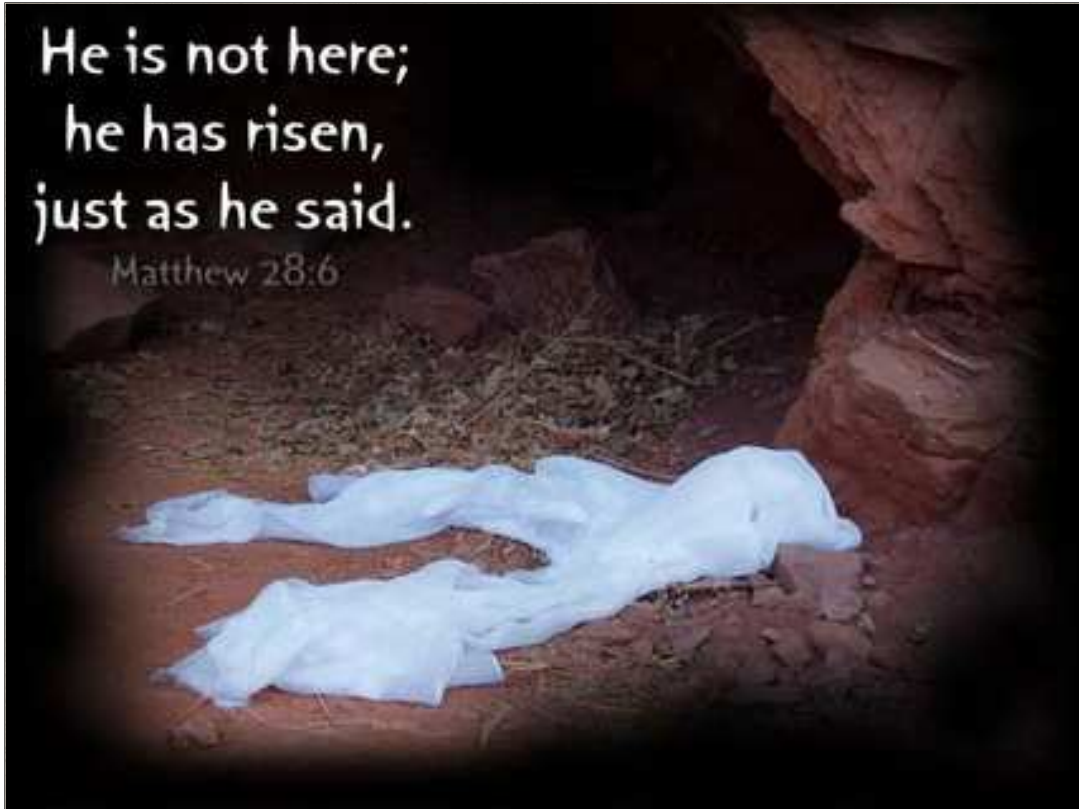


He is not here;
he has risen,
just as he said.

Matthew 28:6



Happy Birthday, World

This morning I'd like to share some things from Christian Apologist, Pastor and Teacher – Dr. Greg Boyd. Dr. Boyd, a well-known theologian, has written extensively about many subjects including apologetics – the defense and explanation of the Christian faith. I'm indebted to Dr. Boyd for many of the insights I'll share this morning.

12 But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? 13 For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either.

14 And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. 15 And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead.

16 And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

18 In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! 19 And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

Asked to Swallow a Whopper

- Many people just find it hard to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead.

They might say, “Every dead person I’ve ever know has stayed dead. How can you ask me to believe otherwise?”

Just because you don’t see something everyday doesn’t mean that it’s not possible.

Reasons to Believe

Reason 1.
Just follow the
evidence.

It doesn't appear to be a legend or a lie. If it's made up, then why ...

- ... are the disciples rather dull and stupid?

• In the later legends of the period they have the apostles doing superhuman things – a legend of the 3rd century has Peter flying around Jerusalem.

• Jews associated these types of legends with paganism and hated them. Why would Jewish disciples make stuff like this up?

So if it's not a legend or a lie – follow the evidence – it might just be the truth.

... have women
first discovering
Jesus' empty
tomb?

... would Jewish
disciples create a
crucified
Messiah?

... are the
disciples not
superhuman as
in legends?

Reason 2.

Look around - the world is a stranger and more beautiful place than it might first appear.

Consider light - a wave and particle?

It's got to be one or the other, right?

Yet Einstein demonstrated that it's both. It's called the photo-electric effect in 1905. Yet it's certainly not obvious.

He also showed during a solar eclipse how the light around the sun was bent by the gravitational pull of the sun. He measured the distance of the stars from the sun demonstrated that their light as it passed by the sun was pulled toward it. The world is a stranger and beautiful place than we might imagine.

Entangled Electrons

Entangled electrons are ones that spin around a proton in opposite directions.

Alan Aspect was able to prove in 1984 that if you break these apart, even if they are light years apart, what you do to one you will do to the other.

Childbirth is a miracle - we're just used to it.

Imagine if God created a whole race full grown. Work with me, here.

John and Mary meet and fall in love and get married. They discover what certain part of the body are for.

In a few months, Mary starts to put on a little weight.

John says, "Whoa Mary, back off of the tacos."

She says, "I haven't been eating more tacos, although I have been craving chocolate a lot lately.

In a few months Mary has a baby.

A baby comes out of the women.

Now if you hadn't been there to experience this first hand this might be a little hard to believe.

Imagine Joe telling Sam about this.

"Hey, did you hear about John and Mary?" They fell in love, got married, discovered what certain parts of the body were for. She started getting a big tummy. In a few months a person came out of Mary."

Sam says, "NO WAY" A person. His next question would be "Where?" Joe says "There!"

No way! Who designed this thing – must have been a man.

How is that possible? It doesn't seem to fit with the plumbing. Some man must have designed this.

World is good bit
stranger and
more wonderful
than we might
have imagined.

We are used to
people dying and
staying dead – but in
some cases – in one
case in particular – a
man died and didn't
stay dead.

The resurrection shows that. What we consider normal doesn't always apply – its not the whole show. It's not the end of the story.

This life is just a preparation period for what is coming. It's the warm-up period.

IT'S SORT OF LIKE PREGNANCY

We are sort of in
the same
situation as the
baby in the
womb.

Imagine the baby in the womb. She would experience the birth process as a dying process. It's warm and dark. It meets all of her needs.

She starts to be born – Her head starts to be squeezed and pressured. It's painful thing, if she had an awareness of it.

If she could look at it years later, she'd realize that she wasn't created to stay there but to be here.

Yet he needs to be born, or else be still born.

It's only after she's born that she'll discover what those legs are for – to run.

It's only after she's born she'll discover what those lungs are for – to breathe.

She'll discover what those eyes are for – to see.

She'll discover that she was created for relationship – to give and receive love.

The womb life was a preparation for what was to come.

- We are in that same situation right now.

Reason 3. In a deep part of us, we know that this life is not all that there is.

All of us know that we were not created for this life only. We were created for something more.

There are aspects of ourselves that aren't totally at home here.

We have longings that are not satisfied here.

We know that life is meant to be more than this.

We never live as passionately as we know we were made for.

We never laugh as hard and deep and consistently as we know we were made for.

We are not as alive and aware and awake as we know we ought to be.

We never love as deeply and completely as we know we were designed for.

We have a dream of another world inside us – it haunts us, it indicts us, it make this world feel sort of suffocating, often rather painful.

All those hopes and dreams point to something else, something beyond the grave. And when Jesus raises from the dead he points to what that something else is.

The Conclusion:
What happened first
to him, will happen to
us. The resurrection
shows that life will
conquer death.

We will live in a world where we'll live as we were meant to live, we'll love as we were meant to love, we'll laugh as we were meant to laugh, we'll rejoice like God has always wanted us to rejoice.

All of this is what it means **to be born into the Kingdom of God that will never end.**

We won't have bodies that get old and die, no more headaches, no more backaches, no more wrinkles, the aging process will be no more. When we put on our resurrection body and walk in the kingdom of God, No more sickness, disease or deformity.

No more war, no more mindless wasting of life, evil will be defeated, no more oppression, Satan and his angels will be finally be defeated.

No more tsunamis or earthquakes, no more swine flu or bird flu, no more AIDS. God's love will define every square inch of the cosmos.

No more cancer. **He shall wipe away every tear from our eyes, and we'll walk in the joy and celebration of Jesus Christ. That's what the resurrection means. Praise God!**

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 42

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead.

Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.

43 Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.

44 They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

The resurrection puts everything in this life in perspective.

You can be optimistic in all situations. This life can really bite sometimes, right? There is no pain, no suffering, shame, headache that is permanent. It's temporary if you know the person of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection means that your labor is not in vain, no prayer is in vain, no sacrificial act of love is in vain. It always comes back on you.

The only question that remains is, “Do you believe?”

Just like with birth from the womb, what happens here determines what happens after.

Will you be born into the Kingdom of God, or will you be still born? All of this hangs on another question: “Do you know Jesus Christ?”

He is the way, the truth and the life. The firstborn from the dead. The one who is the way, who leads the way into this new world on the other side of death.

As we end the service today, I want to give everyone a chance to do just that.

Are you connected? Are you a friend of God. That’s not just about knowing some information. It’s not about having some fire insurance – that’s a distortion of the real gospel. **Is your heart surrendered to Jesus Christ?**

What God wants is heart that is fully surrendered to Jesus Christ, who follows Jesus as Lord. One who has a relationship with God.

Maybe at one time you were walking with God, but you aren’t right now. Maybe, you’ve never committed you life to Jesus Christ. Accepting Christ is not a magic formula. **It’s like a marriage commitment – a promise to follow him.**

It’s to say, “Lord, I will live for you.” I want to give everyone, a chance to do that right now.

Kingdom people start praying, because someone’s life is about to change.

Let’s bow our heads. If you are not surrendered before God. If you are not living in a surrendered state before God, I want to pray for you right now. I want you to raise your hand as a sign of your commitment to him, and I’ll pray for you. Just surrender to God. You’re saying I commit to you. It’s not magic – it’s a commitment.

But you see this determines you’re being part of the resurrection. He is the way into this new life that never ends.

Holy Spirit, just seal this decision that ones have made.

Okay, I’m going to lead you in a prayer, and we’re going to all pray together, because this is about community. This is a way to support each other.

The Bible says, “Believe in your heart, and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and you will be saved.” You will enter into the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So confess this with your mouth. Say it out loud. Everyone pray together. We’ll all join you in this. Say

Heavenly Father ... I acknowledge ... that you are God ... and I confess ... I have not ... lived reflecting that fact ... I am a sinner ... in need of your grace... I turn from my sin ... and surrender my life to you. ... I ask you Lord Jesus to forgive me, to cleanse me, and to live inside me. ... and help me to live for you. ... the rest of my life starting now ... Thank you Lord for loving me and saving me. Amen.

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