



One Page Sermon

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Two Stories Emerged on Easter

Recap of Sermon from 4/22/23 by Robb McCoy

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-15

They say this is the golden age of television. The streaming services, hungry for content, have empowered new story tellers to tell incredible stories. The stories being told are incredibly entertaining. They wrestle with true emotion, blend lines between comedy and drama, create fantastic new worlds, and reveal truths about society, masculinity, racism, inclusion, and emotional intelligence. There are so many new, incredible stories being told and so many ways to watch them it can be overwhelming.

Thank God for the “Previously On...” feature. We can jump from show to show and get caught up real quick on what’s going on. The “previously on” segment usually gives clues about what is coming in the show at hand. There are often so many story lines and threads running through a show, the “previously on” can give us a reminder, “oh yeah, I remember that guy” or “oh, so they *did* meet at that one party.”

On Easter, we might need a “previously on.” Especially if we left off at the Triumphal Entry. The fact is, a lot happened during the week. We may need a summary reminder of all that is happening, because Good Friday was a heck of a cliff-hanger. The season ended with Jesus dead and sealed in a tomb. But Matthew gives us one little detail that we could easily miss (and is unique to Matthew).

Matthew 27:62-66 would be easy to miss, but consider this your “previously on” reminder. The powerful men that had Jesus killed were scared. They were afraid that they had just made a martyr, and that his violent and shameful death wouldn’t be enough to erase him like they wanted. So they went to Pilate and asked for a guard. They asked for a guard because they had been listening. “He told his followers that he would rise, so let’s make sure we have guards there.”

They put armed guards at the tomb to make sure Jesus’ disciples didn’t come, steal the body, and spread crazy rumors about resurrection (and just in case he did actually rise, they would be there to kill him again).

Then, very early on the first day of the week something happened. The women showed up. It is commonly understood that the women came to anoint the body. This is the story in Mark and Luke. In Matthew however, they did not bring in oils or spices. Jesus had already been anointed – back in 26:6-13 (and perhaps it was one of these women who did it). Maybe, instead of showing up to anoint a dead body, they were showing up because they believed what he had told them so many times. Perhaps the women were there for the same reason the guards were – because they remembered that

Jesus said he would be raised. And then...

The earth quaked. Lightning flashed. And angel of the LORD appeared, and the guards were paralyzed with fear. The women however, were faithful. They heard the words of the angel and believed. They knew that Jesus was risen and they went to tell. Then on the way back to the disciples, they knew completely. Christ had risen. He was risen indeed, and the greatest story ever told had reached its series finale.

The stories we tell entertain us, but the stories we believe shape us. When we believe stories of justice, we make be inspired to work for justice. When we believe stories of hope, we may hold onto hope when it seems to be gone. When we believe stories of new life, we may know new life. When we believe in the Kingdom of Heaven, we may live in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew tells us that Jesus rose, and he also told us that two stories emerged that day. Two stories were born on Easter morning. One story was the one the guards told. Paralyzed by fear, paid off by the powerful who wanted to end the Christ story, they told a story of death. They told a story of grave robbers and lies.

The women told another story.

And both stories remain to this day. The story of Empire is still told. It is a story of exploitation disguised as liberty, prejudice disguised as holiness, destructive conspiracy disguised as truth telling, and money buying power disguised as care for the poor. The story of Empire is thriving. Its aim is to paralyze with fear and incite mobs to release Barabas. Its aim is to mock those who wish to stay awake in the garden of Gethsemane. Its aim is convincing people that everyone who disagrees is an enemy, and that opposition is demonic. Its aim is to keep peace at all costs, but their peace is not a peace of Christ. It is not a peace won by justice or love. It is a peace won by the sword. It is a peace won by dominance and fear. The Roman guards told a story of lies that Matthew says persists to this very day. They told a story that said “Jesus is dead.”

But the story of the women persists as well. The women told a story of a different kind of Kingdom. The women told the story of the Peace of Christ that ends not at the Cross but at an empty tomb. The women told the story of an earth-shattering new reality. They told the story of worship and adoration. They told the story that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. They told the story that “Jesus is risen!”

The stories we tell may entertain us, but the stories we believe shape us.

Which story will we believe?

Next Sunday: Matthew 28:16-20, The Gospel of Matthew ends with the Great Commission