Some words are life-changing words. After they are uttered, the direction and course of one’s life is irrevocably changed.

Words like the ones I said to Raye Jeanne a few months after we first met — “I love you.” Everything about our relationship changed after that.

Words like ones that doctors often say, “I’m sorry; he’s gone.”

And words like, “I don’t ever want to see you or speak to you again.”

And words like, “I forgive you.”

While all of these words can indicate life-changing experiences, there are three words that have changed all things for all time. They are the words uttered by the angel to the women in the tomb on resurrection morning: “He is risen.”

This morning we remember the resurrection of Christ. It is a familiar story for followers of Christ. And we keep coming back to the resurrection because there is nothing more essential to our faith than the resurrection. John MacArthur has said it well:

“…the resurrection is not simply a component of the gospel, it is not merely a feature of the gospel, it is the main event. It is, in fact, the greatest event in the life of our Lord Jesus. And since His life is the greatest life, it is the greatest event in all of human history. It is the culminating event in divine redemption. It is the cornerstone of gospel promise. The resurrection is the source of eternal life for us who believe.” [MacArthur, “Amazement at the Empty Tomb.”]

This morning we will examine the briefest resurrection account in the gospels (Mk. 16:1-8) and find in that passage six aspects of the resurrection.

1. The Resurrection RARITY (vv. 1-3)
2. The Resurrection REVELATION (vv. 4-5)
3. The Resurrection REALITY (v. 6)
4. The Resurrection RESPONSIBILITY (v. 7a)
5. The Resurrection RESTORATION/RECONCILIATION (v. 7b)
6. The Resurrection RECOUNTED (vv. 7-8)
1. The Resurrection Rarity (vv. 1-3)

- We know that resurrection is a rarity. In fact, every other incident — apart from Christ — of someone coming back to life is not resurrection but resuscitation. All those ultimately died again.
  - The widow’s son at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17ff.) — through Elijah
  - The son of the Shunammite (2 Kings 4:32ff.) — through Elisha
  - The man whose dead body was cast into Elisha’s grave (2 Kings 13:21)
  - Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:35ff.)
  - The widow’s son (Luke 7:11ff.)
  - Lazarus (John 11:11ff.) — this was just a few weeks earlier! Cf. Jn. 11:25, 40; 12:32ff.
  - To this point in the gospels, that’s all. So when the women show up at the tomb on Sunday morning, they are not anticipating a resurrection.

- We know that the resurrection in general is a rarity and we know that the disciples and women weren’t anticipating it because they showed up with spices (v. 1) and because they expected the tomb to be closed (v. 3).
  - These spices were evidently purchased on Saturday evening when Sabbath was over so that they could be at the tomb as quickly as possible the next morning.
  - The spices were not for the purpose of embalming (the Jews didn’t embalm), but simply to cover the smell of the decomposing body.

“Clearly the women visited the tomb to see a dead man. We do not stop by a graveside to entertain living people. These women had seen Jesus die and be buried. Their minds were on death.” [Thabiti Anyabwile, Captivated (Kindle Locations 772-773).]

- The women on Sunday morning (at the tomb while the disciples are still in seclusion) didn’t anticipate the resurrection in spite of the fact that Jesus repeatedly promised the resurrection:
  - And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mk. 8:31)
  - As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. (Mk. 9:9-10)
  - For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” (Mk. 9:31)
  - “They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.” (Mk. 10:34)
Notice some other details that Mark points out in these verses:

✓ The women came when the men did not. The women were the first at the tomb and the first to know of the resurrection. Given their lowly status, that revelation is an indication that the story was not concocted — if it had been a lie and a story, the men would have made the discovery.

➢ There were prominent men involved in the burial and resurrection — Joseph of Arimathea and Nichodemus took and prepared the body and put it in Joseph’s tomb; though they were both members of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body that condemned Christ on Friday morning.

➢ The disciples, who had been closest to Christ were evidently more fearful and confused than any of the others around Christ, including Joseph and the women.

✓ Among the women who came was Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had thrown out 7 demons (Lk. 8:2) — the same woman who kept going back to the tomb on Sunday (Jn. 20:2, 11ff). And also Salome, who was the mother of James and John and may have been the sister of Mary (Jesus’ mother, making Salome the aunt of Jesus).

✓ The women came with love and devotion —

➢ They came as early as they could — they began making their way to the tomb before daybreak (very early indicates before 6 a.m.) and arrived there after the sun had risen (after gathering all the women together along with the supplies). They had no plan other than they wanted to put more spices on Jesus’ body. There was no practical use for this action since Joseph and Nicodemus had already put 100 lbs. of spices on Jesus body on Friday night (Jn. 19:38-40).

➢ They had no plan — it was not until they were on the way that they thought about what to do about the stone. (The stone would have been several inches thick and several feet in diameter. It would have rested in a track and would have been rolled down the track to rest in front of the opening to the tomb.)

➢ They had no idea the tomb had been sealed and was being guarded by soldiers (Mt. 27:62ff).

➢ They just wanted to do one last act of love for the Savior to whom they were devoted.

• On resurrection morning, no one expected the resurrection. It was a rarity that was unexpected and unanticipated despite the teaching of Jesus that it was coming.

✓ The resurrection is still unanticipated and unbelieved today. People will acknowledge that the tomb was empty — the historical record doesn’t allow anything else — but they won’t believe it was empty because of the resurrection.

✓ As followers of Christ, we can affirm that resurrection is a rarity — but that doesn’t mean it is an impossibility. As Jesus said, “with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26). For the one who is infinite in power, death is not impossible to overcome. He can do all that He wills to do.

✓ And He willed Christ to be resurrected, and Christ was resurrected.
Notice now another aspect of the resurrection on Easter morning…

2. The Resurrection REVELATION (vv. 4-5)

- As the women came to the tomb, they were sad and discouraged; they acted hopeless: while walking their eyes were on the ground so that it wasn’t until they got to the tomb that they even *looked up*. It’s as though they couldn’t bear to look at what they anticipated seeing.

- And then they *saw*. As they first arrived, they *looked up* — a single quick glance — and what they saw made them look again more carefully. Then they saw. The word is θεωρεῖν — they “theorized” something had happened (Mt. 28:2). Someone had been there before them because the stone had been rolled up the track, away from the opening to the tomb and secured into place.

- As a side note, don’t think that the stone is moved to let Jesus out. The angels moved the stone to reveal that the Savior was no longer there (1 Pt. 3:18 — he was quickened by the Spirit). Unlike Lazarus (Jn. 11:43-44) Jesus had no need for anyone to let Him out (Jn. 20:19, 26).

- When the door of the tomb is opened, the tomb is already empty, and death and sin are defeated.

- When the women *saw*, this theory is beginning to take hold of their minds and hearts.

- Then they *entered the tomb*. Again, the reason for moving the stone was to allow the people into the tomb, not to let Jesus out.

- They would have stepped through a hole perhaps 2-4 feet in diameter into a small anteroom (6-8 sq. ft.) and then looked to the right where there would have been another small room with tomb beds cut into the stone where bodies would have been placed.

- But they didn’t see (or smell) the anticipated body. What they saw *amazed* the women — they were startled, awe-struck, and dumbfounded. Instead of the body, they see a **young man in white** whom we understand to be an angel. Luke tells us that his clothing was not just white, but it was dazzling like lightning (24:4). This was heavenly clothing (Mk. 9:3).

- For 36-48 hours all the followers of Christ have been in despair. These women were at the cross and had seen Him die. There was no doubt about His death. And now it is revealed that the tomb is empty. Christ is gone.

- Hope is possible for these women and the other followers of Jesus.

- He is an astonishing God who does what no one else can do. And that will become even more apparent in the hours and days to come for these disciples.

- We’ve seen the rarity of the resurrection and the revelation of the resurrection. Now also notice the reality of the resurrection.
3. The Resurrection Reality (v. 6)

- The empty tomb has been revealed. But the women don’t yet comprehend. It’s kind of like when I finally proposed to Raye Jeanne her response was, “You mean, this is really it…!!!”

- So the angel clarifies for the women what has happened:
  - First he says, do not be amazed — that is, “stop what you are doing…” They have placed limits on God something like, “I don’t think this could be…” and he says, “stop it!”
  - They have coming looking for Jesus the Nazrene, who has been crucified. The angel is stressing two realities with this statement: they are looking for Jesus, the man, not Jesus the God-Man. They are looking for the one who was born to Mary and was a great teacher and friend. And even more, they are looking for the one who was crucified. In 15:45 it says that Pilate gave the body of Jesus to Joseph. The word is one that means, “corpse.” Everything in these chapters emphasizes the reality of the death of Christ. And these women are still functioning as if He would always stay dead. They’re looking for the corpse of Jesus the son of Mary when they should be looking for the living God-Man, Jesus Christ.
  - So with great clarity and simplicity the angel says, He has risen.
    - The sense is that “He has been completely, once for all raised!”
    - And this resurrection is a particular act of God — the Father brought Him to life — Acts 2:24; 3:15; Rom. 6:4; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15. The Father poured out His wrath on Friday afternoon resulting in Jesus cry, why have You forsaken Me? and then satisfied by Christ’s death to pay the penalty of man’s sins, God brought Him to life as a sign of that satisfaction.
    - And this One who is resurrected is the first fruits of the resurrection — that is, Christ is the first One of many more to be resurrected eternally (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18).
  - But not only does the angel say, He is risen, but also, “He is not here; behold here is the place where they laid Him.” If He is risen from the dead, He can no longer be in the tomb, and they were welcome to look around and see for themselves.
    - John points out that the grave clothes were still in place — stiffened by the spices in the form of a body without the body inside, with the face cloth folded neatly beside it (20:6-7). There is no body where it was expected. It’s gone, and it is gone in a miraculous way; Lazarus needed to be unbound; Jesus passed through the wrappings!
    - Luke says that the angel also said, why do you seek the living One among the dead (24:5).

- The resurrection is a real event. It’s not a fictitious story. It happened in history and is verifiable. He was seen by Mary (Jn. 20), the 12 (Jn. 20-21) and later by more than 500 (1 Cor. 15). The reality of the resurrection gave hope to the women and disciples on Easter morning, and it is the only thing that gives hope to us today.
• While we are grateful for the death of Christ, the death of Christ without the resurrection of Christ is meaningless; but the death of Christ with the resurrection gives us everything we need. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:55-58. The resurrection is real and foundational.
• But since the resurrection is real, there is another aspect related to the resurrection…

4. The Resurrection RESPONSIBILITY (v. 7a)

• Since the women have seen the evidence of the resurrection, the angel then tells them, go, tell…
• They came with spices for a burial and now they are commanded to leave with a message. Why they came is no longer important; what is important now is that they go and tell.
• There is a sense of urgency in the message of the angel. They came to take care of a body; they are told to go declare the message. They came with a menial task and they leave with an essential duty.

“ Their knowledge of the truth called for action. ‘God does not disclose the Resurrection fact except to enlist people in a task.’ Their faithfulness had qualified them to be the first recipients of the good news, and it laid on them the duty of being its first messengers to His disciples.” [Hiebert, p. 410.]

• What they were told to tell the disciples was two-fold:
  ✓ They were to remind the others that Jesus had promised the resurrection and that He was indeed now resurrected (Mt. 28:7; Lk. 24:6-9).
  ✓ They were to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee as He had told them He would do (on Thursday night during the Lord’s Supper, Mk. 14:28).

• And then the disciples will see Him. He is trustworthy to keep His promises. He promised the resurrection and He is resurrected; they could trust Him with anything else. Just as He told you — when Jesus makes a declaration, you can trust Him.
• What the women (and all followers, Mt. 28:18-20) are responsible to do is to declare this good news to others. The tomb is empty; Christ is alive, and so can we be alive. That was the message that day and that is the message we have today.
  ✓ We deserve the wrath of God; we deserved to be abandoned to suffer His infinite and eternal judgment. But if we turn from our sin to trust and love (follow) Christ, He will withhold His wrath and impute the righteousness of Christ to us (2 Cor. 5:21).
  ✓ This is the message of Easter. And if you are not a follower of Christ, this is the message you must believe today. You need a new life and the only way to have that new life is to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin — a Savior from both the penalty and power of sin.
• We’ve seen the rarity, revelation, reality, and responsibility of the resurrection. Now notice…

5. **The Resurrection RECONCILIATION (v. 7b)**

• If you read too quickly you’ll miss this one — in verse 7 the angel tells the women, *go tell His disciples and Peter*. Why Peter? Because while the others had all fled from the cross, except John and the women, Peter denied his relationship with Jesus three times, and the final time he called down an oath from heaven to affirm that he didn’t know Jesus — “may God strike me dead and damn me to hell if I know that man…” (14:71; Mt. 26:74-75).

• And now Jesus particularly wants Peter to hear the message that Jesus will be awaiting Peter in Galilee. Peter was heartbroken over his sin — a sin that evidently led to godly repentance and with this declaration Jesus affirms that Peter hasn’t done anything unforgivable!

• Peter’s sin was tragic — but not dissimilar to our own rejections of God’s activity and authority in our lives — and he and I and you are all forgiven. It is this principle that John affirms in 1 Jn. 1:9 — even as believers we still sin, but God is eternally faithful to forgive — remove, expunge — every sin and cleanse us from all of those sins so that we can have fellowship with Him.

• The cross and resurrection are great news because through Christ’s work on Friday and Sunday, we are reconciled to God. In fact, not only is God no longer out to “get us,” but because of Christ, God no longer has that right to “get us.” Our sin has been imputed to Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us and we are forever in fellowship with Him.

  ✓ Do you know any Peters — those who have sinned in ways that they think leaves them forever outside of fellowship with God? Go and tell them that forgiveness is available…

  ✓ Are you a Peter? Have you sinned against the Lord and you regret it and believe that it is unforgiveable? Then hear this word — Jesus is waiting for you to confess and come to Him in repentance…

• There is one more aspect of the resurrection for us to see this morning…

6. **The Resurrection RECOUNTED (v. 8)**

• *They went out and fled* — they went a-running! Perhaps it was obedience to the command of the angel — *go, tell…* but they were also *trembling and astonished* means that they were quivering with fear and in ecstasy, confusion and joy! They were running in fear and excitement.

• Some have made much of the statement, *they said nothing to anyone* — lit., it says “they said nothing to no one” (double negative). The emphasis is on the fact that when they left they didn’t
stop to talk to anyone along the way but hastily went to the disciples, because by the time they got to where the disciples were, they were talking (Mt. 28:8; Lk. 24:9). Because they were fearful of the angel’s words, they did exactly what he said and went directly to the disciples and Peter…

• They told. And did they tell! From that small band of believers has arisen a church of great influence and power that remains in existence to this day. And it all stems from the resurrection account.

CONCLUSION:

In some sense, the story of the resurrection is pretty simple and straightforward. It is remarkable, but it is also clear.

✓ Christ came to earth as the eternal God-Man — God incarnated in flesh.
✓ He lived a perfect life — unstained by sin and unable to sin.
✓ He died — not because He was Himself subject to death, but as a substitute to absorb God’s wrath against sinners.
✓ He rose from the dead as an affirmation of His victory over sin and death and of God’s satisfaction with Him.
✓ In Him is all hope.
✓ That’s all clear from the account of Jesus’ life in the Gospels.
✓ The only remaining question is, “Do you believe this?” (Jn. 11:25)