

**Made New**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 3/31/24**

Today we are joining in with millions of people in churches around the world celebrating the greatest event of all time – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The title of my message is Made New – Easter Changes Everything.

The effects of the resurrection have reverberated throughout history. In fact, do you know that **Easter is the pivotal point in history**? Every time you write a date, the focal point is Jesus Christ. The current year is 2024. 2024 what? 2024 years since Christ. Our time is divided into BC – Before Christ – and AD – Anno Domini – In the year of the Lord.

The resurrection event split history. It's the most important event of history - so much so that we measure our time by it. Even the poor atheist who does not believe in God – every time they write a check or anything else that has a date on it – they are validating the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

By the way, **there is more historical proof of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus than any person in ancient history.** Belief in Jesus is not a blind leap in the dark – His life, death, burial and resurrection are all proven by the facts of history.

And the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us as well. It changes us. It renews us. But, in order for there to be new life, there had to first be a death and then a resurrection. And in order for it to give new life to us – we must have faith in Christ.

I've preached many Easter sermons, but I've never preached one based on the women of the Easter story. Some people erroneously believe that women did not play an important role in the life of Christ. This is simply not true.

- It was a woman who anointed Jesus' head with oil in preparation for His burial.
- It was a woman who urged her husband (Pontius Pilate) to stand against the power of the mob and spare an innocent man's life.
- Women were the ones to stand at the foot of the cross as Jesus died.
- Women were at the tomb when Jesus was buried.
- Women were the first to witness the resurrection.
- Women were the first individuals to be entrusted with sharing the good news of Christ's resurrection.

**These women never deserted their Savior.** When the rest of the world had given up on Jesus for failing to look like the liberator they expected, the women stuck around. When the rest of the disciples deserted Jesus, the women stayed.

Women were a noticeably big part of the entire Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to the crucifixion to the resurrection. The presence of a group of women at the crucifixion of Jesus is found in all four Gospels. Matthew 27:55-56 says:

***Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for His needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.***

Notice there were many women there. Each of the four Gospels lists some of them, but not all of them. That's why their lists are different. For instance, John also mentions that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there.

The interesting thing is that John was the only one of the 12 disciples who was there at the cross. Matthew 26:56 says that when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane,

***At that point, all the disciples deserted Him and fled.***

John was the only one who came to the crucifixion. The other disciples were too afraid to be at the burial or resurrection. But women were there at the burial of Christ and women were there right after the resurrection. Matthew 27:57-61 says:

***As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.***

Joseph and 2 Mary's were the only followers of Christ who saw His burial. Then Matthew 28:1-7 says:

***After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay."***

**1 – EASTER CONFRONTS OUR FEARS AND OFFERS US JOY**

This morning the first thing you need to hear is the message of the angel at the empty tomb. “Do not be afraid.”

We live in a world where it is easy to find ourselves in a remarkably similar place to these women in the story. Many people believe that Jesus is lifeless. Many are filled with anxiety and fear: fearful that their lives will never change, that their circumstances won't change, that their marriage cannot be rescued, that their diagnosis is a forgone conclusion.

But **Easter confronts our fears**. The empty tomb reveals the power of God that was not just a reality for Jesus then, but a reality for us today. **The power of the resurrection means that nothing but the tomb is meant to be empty.**

Easter is a source of great joy for Christians. We are filled with joy because resurrection power is able to make everything new.

The empty tomb means your past can be made new.

The empty tomb means your hope for the future can be made new.

The empty tomb means your life can be made new.

No matter where you find yourself today, the empty tomb pushes back against our fear and reminds us that the best is yet to come because Jesus Christ is alive!

We can see joy overcoming fear in the life of Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:9 says:

***When Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene...***

When Jesus saw her, He told her to go tell His disciples He had risen. Matthew 28:8 says

***So they hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell His disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”***

Joy overcome fear and Mary Magdalene was the first person to share the good news about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is remarkable. Not just because she was a woman and women were treated as second class back then – except not by Jesus.

Remember, I'm preaching on Made New and what is even more remarkable about Mary Magdalene is who she was before Jesus made her new! As one of Jesus's most faithful followers, Mary Magdalene, or Mary from Magdala is mentioned by name 14 times in the four gospels. That is extraordinary for any biblical character, but especially for a female in that culture. And it's even more extraordinary because of her past. I read the first part of Mark 16:9 to you earlier.

***After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw Him was Mary Magdalene,***

The rest of the verse says:

***...the woman from whom He had cast out seven demons.***

The first person to share the gospel of the risen Christ was a woman who had been delivered of 7 demons! I love this about the Bible. It does not sugar coat the lives of people – it tells real truth about them.

In the Bible we see people who were totally made new by God.

Moses – killed an Egyptian

Abraham – had a child with Hagar – a woman who was not his wife

David – committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed

Yet how are these men known?

Moses is called the friend of God.

Abraham is called the father of faith.

David is called a man after God's own heart.

This shows us that God radically changes people and makes them new.

And that is one of the evidences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! We know the resurrection is true because of the historical record of eyewitness testimony. We know it's true because the tomb is empty.

We also know it's true because of the changed lives of people made new. The resurrection changed the disciples from cowards hiding in fear to bold, fearless men.

The book of Acts tells about a Jewish leader named Saul who dedicated His life to jailing and killing Christians. Yet he was changed into the apostle Paul who wrote much of the New Testament. What changed Him? He met the resurrected Jesus!

One of the most incredible proofs of the resurrection was the changed life of James, the brother of Jesus. John 7:5 says that Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him. Yet, after the resurrection, James saw Jesus, became a believer, became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James. What changed this skeptic into a believer? The resurrection!

**The best proof of the resurrection and that Jesus is still alive is the fact that He did not stop changing lives after He died. He rose again and He is still in the business of changing lives today.**

I can tell you countless stories of people being drastically changed, dramatically healed and restored. And I believe God can change your life!

## **2- JESUS CAN TAKE THE OLD AND MAKE IT NEW**

So many people think that people cannot really change. Nonsense! The whole point of the gospel is change.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

***Whoever is a believer in Christ is a new creation. The old life is gone. A new way of living has come into existence.***

When people put their faith in Jesus, they become new creations.

The first creation took place in a garden in the book of Genesis. God created humankind without sin and they existed in a perfect relationship with Him. But that after sin entered the world, everything was broken and man was separated from God. This is why Jesus did what He did. It is His broken body and shed blood on the cross that pays the price for our forgiveness of sin and restores our brokenness.

What is so interesting is that Jesus' body was laid in a tomb in a garden. It is in this second garden that a new creation takes place. All of our old ways of living are replaced with new ones.

- Jesus takes our selfishness and replaces it with generosity.
- He takes our anger and replaces it with love.
- He takes our addiction and replaces it with freedom.

Satan tries to use our past to keep us from following Christ. He tells us we're too bad, we've made too many mistakes, we're beyond hope. What lies! Mary Magdalene's past did not define her and your past does not define you! God does. Nothing in your past can hold you back from God's grace and mercy. **The resurrection gives you the power to move past your past!** Ephesians 1:19-20 says:

***I pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe Him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...***

That means that through our faith in Jesus, the same power that raised Him for the dead changes us and makes us new. As a result...

### **3- THE CORRECT RESPONSE TO EASTER IS FAITH**

Easter morning revealed an empty tomb because Jesus had risen from the grave. The two women who first made the discovery had a choice to make. Do they trust the good news or do they ignore the evidence in front of them?

The resurrection of Jesus was good news that changed the lives of the disciples and by their impact, the world. We have the same choice to make as the woman did. **When we choose faith in Christ, our past is forgiven and our lives are made new.**

To celebrate Easter without making the decision to trust in Jesus' resurrection power is to miss the point completely. You can be made new, and it is made possible through faith in Jesus Christ. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said

***I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies... Do you believe this?"***

Resurrection is not just an event – it's a person named Jesus Christ.

And I ask you the same question that Jesus asked – do you believe that He is the resurrection and the life? Do you believe God's resurrection power can cancel your past and give you a fresh start!

Did you ever wish you could just start over? Well, the good news is "YOU CAN!" Some of you are weighed down by guilt and shame of past sin. Jesus knows what you've done wrong, but He didn't come to rub it in, He came to rub it out – erase it – forgive it – give you a clean slate.

He cancels our past and chooses to forget our sins. If God forgives and forgets, why are you remembering it and letting it hold you back? How long do you remember your bills once you've paid them? Do you worry about last month's electric bill after you've paid it? Doesn't it seem silly to worry about a bill you've already paid? Well, Christ has already paid for every sin you have ever or will ever commit. The power of Easter cancels our past – and the power of Easter conquers our present.

All of us have problems in the present. Our real problem, however, is what we do with our problems. We usually try to solve them in our own strength rather than trusting in God and His strength. 2 Corinthians 13:3-4 says:

***Christ is not weak when He deals with you; He is powerful among you. Although He was crucified in weakness, He now lives by the power of God. We, too, are weak, just as Christ was, yet by God's power we will be alive with Him and will have God's power.***

You don't have the power to change yourself, but God does! God has the power to conquer all our problems. But you may say, you don't know how bad my problems are – you don't know my circumstances. No I don't – but I know how big God is and I know how strong His resurrection power is! **The power of Easter cancels our past, conquers our present, and changes our future.**

You haven't gone too far. You're not beyond hope. God loves you right where you are and He can bring good out of your situation.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has changed everything. It proves to us God's love for us. It makes available to us God's grace and forgiveness.

Easter is all about the power to change – to be made new. Easter changed history and Easter can change you.

**On Easter - God took the worst possible situation – the death of His Son – turned it around, used it for good and changed the world. And He can take the worst in you and make something brand new!**

Some of you feel dead inside – resurrection power can change that!  
Some of you are going broke and you've lost your hope - resurrection power can change that!  
Some of you feel your marriage is dead and should probably be buried - resurrection power can change that!

Some of you have wounds from the past that you think will never heal – resurrection power can change that!

Some of you are struggling with a sin or an addiction – resurrection power can change that!  
Some of you are struggling with unforgiveness, anger, bitterness - resurrection power can change that!

Some of you are so down on yourselves that you don't even want to go on living - resurrection power can change that!  
Some of you don't even know if you believe in God anymore - resurrection power can change that!

The Resurrection doesn't just make us a little bit better. It's not one step on the road to self-improvement. It doesn't help us be good. Being good enough or kind enough isn't what God is looking for. God isn't calling you to try harder to be good! He's calling you to fall in repentance at the foot of the cross and receive brand new life through faith in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ!

Resurrection power takes your sin and makes you righteous! Through resurrection power – every sin and failure of your life is forgiven! The question then becomes What should we do? Romans 10:9-10 tells us:

***If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.***

The resurrection is true and that same power that raised Christ from the dead can give you a brand-new life.  
Acknowledge our need for forgiveness and salvation  
Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ  
Confess Him as Lord  
Do this and your life will be made new in Christ!