
Easter: Jesus is Risen!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sometimes we see it in a courtroom as eyewitnesses present their testimony; sometimes we encounter this with family and friends when we remember together a certain past event; and we discover in such situations that sometimes different people have varying perspectives on a given event; and so, they relate their memories in ways slightly differently from how you tell the story. No one doubts the event in question really happened, and mostly people all agree on the big details, but other details can vary from person to person. Well, the New Testament accounts of Jesus' resurrection on Easter are like that; and today on *Groundwork*, as we celebrate Christ's victory over death, we will dig into the Easter stories in the four gospels. Stay tuned.

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And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now the fourth and final program in a four-part series we have done for Lent; and now, in this episode, Easter. The first three episodes, we looked at various things that happened, and various things that Jesus taught as he made his way to the cross; and now in this final program, we will joyfully get to the other side of the crucifixion and that grand and glorious day known as Easter.

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And as we said in the introduction a few minutes ago, Darrell, we have four gospel accounts of the resurrection, and although they all agree on all the big details, on some of the finer details, differing angles and perspectives on Easter means that each account differs slightly from the others, but I think we need to say upfront that that ought not to make us doubt our faith or the reliability of the Bible.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is true. It is kind of like when, if there is an accident at the corner, and there are four different people who see the accident, they have their own account of what they saw happen. It doesn't mean that one is more true than the other. They are all true, they just have a different vantage point, and that is how the gospels have a different emphasis for each one, and we will go through that today.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

We also know that a gospel is a unique literary form or genre as it is called. The gospel is not a history book; it is not an academic history book; it is not a biography of Jesus; it is not a daybook or diary that chronicles events as they happen; it is not a newspaper account. Gospels are pieces of proclamation, Darrell; and so, you know, you talk about four different eye witnesses of the same car accident or something, having different vantage points, there is that; but each of the four gospel writers also had a distinctive original reading audience, and they were shaping the raw material of Jesus' life to have the most meaning to the people they had in mind as they wrote it.

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Yes; for instance, Matthew is writing to make sure that people understand that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah that they were looking for. So, he is writing particularly to Jewish readers in that time, to make sure that they know these are the signs and here he is.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And Luke, we know, wrote for more of a Greek and Gentile audience. By the time John wrote, we think that John knew about Matthew, Mark and Luke; and so he composed a gospel that didn't include all the material they did, but John forged a gospel that included a lot of stuff that was not in Matthew, Mark and Luke. So, they each had their own purpose; they each had their own way to edit the material and shape the material that would have the most impact, because the goal is to make people believe that Jesus is the Son of God—that he is the promised Christ—the Messiah. So, that is why, as we look in this program, Darrell, at the four resurrection stories, we want to savor the unique flavor of each, and let them together create for us a rich and full picture of the Easter event.

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It's a beautiful thing for us to be able to trust the power of the Holy Spirit to make sure that the Word becomes and stays infallible and not contradictory. So, we trust the Holy Spirit's authority over all the Bible. He is the one who inspired them to write what they wrote; and we want to look at what it says in Mark. So, this is the shortest gospel, and it starts in Chapter 16.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Mark writes: When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" ⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

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So, when Mark writes...I was always taught that Mark is the action-packed gospel. In his book, he uses the word *immediately* a lot: Immediately they went here; immediately they followed him; immediately this; and you see a lot of demons getting gagged; you see a lot of healing and you see a lot of action happening in Mark’s gospel; and the action is happening really fast in this passage as well, Scott.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; Mark began with a bang, and now it ends with a bang. One of the things, Darrell, that all four gospels agree on is that women were the ones who went to the tomb early on Sunday morning. That would be their first day of the week...the day following the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday. So, they came to honor Jesus’ corpse by anointing it. That was the custom back then, but then they realized on the way that they had forgotten something that might be kind of important: Would they be strong enough to remove that large stone at the mouth of the tomb? Only to discover once they got there, well, that is not going to be a problem; the stone is already rolled away.

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Yes; so, they actually find that there is...that is not a problem...but they also find that the tomb is not completely empty because there is an angel in there and he is giving them instructions. It is really interesting: 1) That the angel is there to give them this; but 2) the thing that is interesting is their response to what actually was said to them.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so, they hear the good news: Jesus has been raised from the dead; and then, the angel tells them they can find Jesus in Galilee, which is surprising. Galilee is seventy miles to the north. On foot, that is going to take you a couple of days. Why do they have to go all the way up to Galilee? I don't know, but they are also told, of course, to tell the good news to the disciples. Oh, and the angel here throws in: And Peter. Scholars think, Darrell, that Mark used Peter as his key source of information. There are things in Mark that only Peter would have known. So, maybe it makes sense that Peter says to Mark: Now remember, the angel mentioned me specifically...write that down; write that down. He said: And Peter...you know, because Peter had denied Jesus, and this is a sign that he is being forgiven. So, Peter would make sure Mark got that one in there. But then, Darrell, the story takes a really surprising turn.

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Yes; so, when the women leave, they actually leave surprised, afraid, scared. When we hear these gospel messages, and when we preach these gospel messages, we focus a lot on the joy; we focus a lot on the excitement—the exuberance of really high praise; but that is not the response that they had initially. So, it is interesting that the silence and the fear that they have, and then the Gospel of Mark just kind of ends.

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It just stops and the last word is *afraid*. Wow! So, it is like a freeze frame, you know. He had mentioned three women, so I kind of picture them with their eyes wide, their mouths open; they look terrified. Freeze frame...fade to black...end. It is like, wow! What kind of way is that to end a gospel? Why would he do that? We know the women didn't stay silent, or we wouldn't have this story to tell. They did tell the disciples; of course, they did; but maybe, Darrell, is the theory that Mark ends in frustrating silence. Maybe that is Mark's way of looking us readers in the eye to say: The gospel cannot really end in silence, can it? The story has to be told; the silence has to be broken; so, dear reader, are you doing that? Are you telling the story, or does the story end in silence for you, too?

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It's a beautiful technique that Mark uses. So, if he leaves the story ... that means that we as the readers need to pick up the story and continue to proclaim the good news, and it is really powerful that he would leave it that way; and then, he says go back. So, I mean, it is kind of Mark's way of telling us to go back and re-read now that we know what has actually happened. We can see clearer knowing the end from the beginning.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Galilee is seventy miles to the north, as we said. Galilee is also Mark 1:14. That is where we started, so when the angel said: Go back to Galilee, that also might be Mark looking at the reader and saying: You have been to the cross, now you cannot understand Jesus without the cross. Now you have been there, go back and re-read the whole gospel. You didn't get it right the first time; now you have been to the cross; now you can read it all over again. Go back to Galilee. Start over in Chapter 1 and read the story in the light of the cross.

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Segment 2

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angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” ⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

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So, this is the second one we have looked at now: Mark, now Matthew. Again, women going to the tomb. The roster here is slightly different from Mark’s, but we have women; we have a rolled-away stone; we have a mostly empty tomb; and we have an angel. Matthew throws in something we haven’t heard from...and we won’t hear from the others...that there was an earthquake of some violence at the moment of the resurrection perhaps; and that the angel is not just a young man dressed in white, but he has an appearance like lightning and it was so awesome that these strapping Roman soldiers...they passed out. I mean, they just fainted dead away out of terror. That is how awesome that angel was; but here again, Darrell, the first Easter emotion of the women is not joy; Matthew does say they were overjoyed, but the first emotion is fear.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, they were afraid, but they were also overjoyed. I think that that is a very unique combination of emotions. If I hear...I remember when my wife said, “I am pregnant,” and I was afraid, and then it turned to joy, like wait; this is real now. I am actually going to become a father!

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Yes; so, they were afraid, but they were also overjoyed. I think that that is a very unique combination of emotions. If I hear...I remember when my wife said, “I am pregnant,” and I was afraid, and then it turned to joy, like wait; this is real now. I am actually going to become a father!

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It hits my life and changes everything! And so, I am thinking profoundly about the impact of what that would do to our lives; and then the joy sets in, like oh, this is going to be awesome. I cannot wait to be a dad, right? So, when the resurrection happens, they have this emotion that is raw...that is fear; but then it also turns into joy. It is kind of mixed together sometimes. We don't talk about that enough.

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Of course, sometimes I remember we brought our first child home—our daughter—once we got in the house, it was just the two of us. Fear came back. It was like, who said that we know how to raise a kid now? There is nobody here to help us.

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Yes, that is what we did; but right; when you encounter something brand new, something that changes everything, it is spine-tingling, awe inspiring; you do get a little fear. You know, we are good at punching up the joy factor at our Easter worship services in our churches, but a little holy awe and fear on Easter Sunday morning... I don't know how you could engineer that or get it into the liturgy, but a little of that would really help us appreciate the scope of what God actually did in the resurrection.

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So, Mark and Matthew both have the women running away from the tomb—they flee the tomb. Both of them say they are fearful. Matthew adds the joy. But Matthew takes us...so, whereas Mark with that kind of freeze-frame of them just kind of fleeing with their mouths hanging open...Matthew tells us what happens next, and they actually run into Jesus.

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So, they actually see Jesus himself, and he also tells them to go get the disciples, and he is headed to Galilee, but he wants to meet them there. So, they actually see Jesus risen at that moment; the first ones to encounter him there. So, Matthew decides to put that in his gospel and emphasize that vantage point as well.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that is a little bit of Matthew's texture to the resurrection. Now, let's go to Luke 24: On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee. ⁷"The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."⁸ Then they remembered his words. ⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

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So, in Luke's account, it is really interesting that you see, not one man who is dressed like lightning...gleaming like lightning, you see two men who were gleaming like lightning. So, there is a variance there; and then they ask the question: Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here...

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variance there; and then they ask the question: Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

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DARRELL DELANEY

We already told you about this. Remember what he said? I need you to remember what he said. So, he reminds them about what Jesus said would happen, so they could come to the: Oh, yeah; I remember that is what he said.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

A little Easter morning review session here: Jesus told you plain as day; and of course, as we have seen earlier in this series, every time Jesus said that: I am going to be given over to sinners; crucified and on the third day I will rise. It went right in one ear and out the other with the disciples. They never understood what he meant. They didn't really seem to ponder it much. So here...it is not all the disciples, just the female disciples here; but, you know, the angels said: You should have been expecting this. I mean, he told you, how many times?

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DARRELL DELANEY

Three times.

DARRELL DELANEY

Three times.

SCOTT HOEZEE

At least three times when he was with you in Galilee. Anyway, so a lot of the same details that we got in Matthew, and some of the same details we got in Mark; but again, that little extra thing that you have to remember Jesus did say this was going to happen; and so, you should have figured on it. Luke, though, doesn't include that detail that on their way to the disciples, they met Jesus.

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DARRELL DELANEY

So, we see that they actually encountered Jesus beforehand, and he wants to make sure that they tell his brothers...I love how it says his brothers...but also, it is really interesting that when they actually do get to tell the disciples, the disciples don't believe them; and it could be cultural; it could be that women's testimonies were not valid at that time; there is a lot of conjecture from scholars about this; but no one believed them until Peter actually went, and he doesn't understand what he saw.

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So, we see that they actually encountered Jesus beforehand, and he wants to make sure that they tell his brothers...I love how it says his brothers...but also, it is really interesting that when they actually do get to tell the disciples, the disciples don't believe them; and it could be cultural; it could be that women's testimonies were not valid at that time; there is a lot of conjecture from scholars about this; but no one believed them until Peter actually went, and he doesn't understand what he saw.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

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Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the disciples say: that is nonsense. Now, some of us who preach have had that reaction from people who hear our sermons, but you know, you kind of don't expect it here. They are giving the good news of the gospel for the very first time, and the disciples are like: Yeah, right. And so, Peter...impetuous Peter...he hightails it to the tomb, sees that it is empty, but walks away in befuddlement. So again, how interesting, Darrell, that in scripture the first reactions are not celebration, the *Hallelujah Chorus*, jumping up and down, dancing for joy. The first reactions are a matter of fear, of awe, maybe even of terror, but also confusion. This was such a new thing, that you know, the apostles are honest in reporting it this way. This is how it went, and I think, you know, there is something for us to learn there, too: that we really need to try to get some of that holy fear for ourselves.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; when we encounter something that God does in our lives, we know our response is supposed to be joy, but sometimes when we are pondering it, it may not make sense at the moment. No one has ever resurrected before, Scott.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

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No.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is brand new and on the scene for them to encounter a God who is powerful enough to do something like this; and it took a while for them to actually, you know, come to grips with what that meant; and we actually want to continue talking about this with one more gospel we have left, and that is the book of John, so stay tuned.

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Segment 3

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Darrell, let's dig into our last Easter account on this program, John 20.

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Darrell, let's dig into our last Easter account on this program, John 20.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” ³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

So, for some reason, John tells us of only one woman who went to the tomb, but just because John focuses on Mary Magdalene, you know, that doesn’t mean that there weren’t others with her, but John wants to focus on Mary Magdalene; and then of course, right after what you just read, Darrell, there is that famous scene where Mary encounters Jesus in the garden. She thinks he is a gardener, and then he reveals himself to her. That is a lovely scene. So, John just kind of focuses on just one of the women, Mary Magdalene; and here, too, John* tells us that Mary may have been the first to get back to the disciples with the news, but John leaves out any encounter with an angel. In fact, there is no angel here. Mary leaves the tomb saying: I have no idea what happened, because nobody told her anything; don’t know why John leaves out the angel, but Mary just comes back to say: Something has happened to Jesus. Somebody might have stolen his body; I don’t know.

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DARRELL DELANEY

I think that because John is trying to...his gospel is emphasizing that we are giving you these signs so that you may believe in the Son of God. That is what John wrote in his gospel. He wants everyone to know these are the signs; so, we are going to take out the angels, we are going to take out every other emphasis. We want you to focus on what happened to Jesus; because when you focus on the Son then you will believe; and so, I think it is really important that he put his emphasis that way; and even though Mary Magdalene goes back

and tells them, they don't really take her testimony into account either. They have to see it firsthand, and that is why they have John and Peter running to the tomb.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, just like Luke, we are told that Peter did run to the tomb, but here we are told that Peter did not go alone. John went with him. Bible commentator Frederick Dale Bruner has noted that in the Gospel of John, there is kind of a friendly rivalry between Peter and John. John often refers to himself as the beloved disciple; and here we see this kind of sly rivalry in that John makes sure to tell us that, yes, they both ran to the tomb, but John beat Peter. John got there first, but he doesn't go in, but Peter, impetuous as he is, rushes headlong into the cave. John joins him, and does indeed see the scene as Mary described it; and then we are told he believed. But Darrell, believed what?

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DARRELL DELANEY

It is really complicated to understand what he believed, because when it says he saw and believed, it also says right after that that they did not understand from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. So, what exactly are they believing at this point? I think it says something about belief and faith in God in general for believers that this belief that we have is a progressive belief. It starts at very simple stages, and as we continue to walk with God, and see the testimony of what he does in our lives, it grows deeper; and so, they actually had time with Jesus, and they were not getting a lot of the things that he was saying, but then, you know, progressively this belief can actually be growing into something. So, it is not just believe one time and you are done.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and so, this part of the story in John 20 ends a little anticlimactically. John and Peter are dazed and befuddled, and they just go back home...they just go back to the place where they were staying. It would be a

bit before they would encounter Jesus. They will encounter him that evening...everybody but Thomas, that is, will encounter Jesus. And of course, Jesus and Mary Magdalene will encounter each other next; but this part of the story ends, just once again, in confusion. So, Darrell, a whirlwind tour of the four gospel accounts. Let's end with three takeaways, if you will, from this program; things we can ponder and savor.

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First, Darrell, I think we should appreciate the honesty of the gospels. There were different angles and perspectives on this cosmic event. Some people remember some details, forgot others, or didn't notice it; and so, the four gospel writers could have conspired, you know; they could have come together and said: Okay, we have to get this story straight. We have to get everything to make it more believable. But no; they gave us honest accounts from these varying perspectives; and I think a lot of people just think that actually adds to the authenticity of it all.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is a beautiful thing, because if you let it go as raw and uncut, if you will, then it is believable; and I think another thing that we can be reminded about is that the resurrection from the dead is an awesome thing that changes everything. You know, it took us a long time to mess this world up in sin, and it took God a weekend to fix it. So, it is a really powerful testimony of what God can do; and because we have heard this story many times, some of us, we can kind of say: Well, yes; it is just the same thing every year, this, that and the other; but if we can get back to that awe and get back to that newness of the joy of what happened, we could really let that change how we encounter God in our everyday lives.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so, first let's appreciate the honesty; second, let's let that awe come into our hearts as it did for the original witnesses; and then, third, let's remember the one thing all four accounts relate: Having encountered the risen Jesus, we have to tell the story. Easter cannot end in silence, as it did in Mark's gospel with his sudden ending; and as the women had to go and tell, so must we. We have to be able to tell this story.

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sudden ending; and as the women had to go and tell, so must we. We have to be able to tell this story.

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This Gospel that we have been handed. We have been given all authority from heaven and earth by Jesus to tell the story of what has happened. So, I love the fact that we talk about this series and the walk toward the cross, and we don't end in this death and despair; we end with joy and exuberance, and we are enlisted into the story of God to tell the whole world what they need to hear about it.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Because this story represents God's victory over sin and death. This story is the very beginning of our very life as new creations in Christ; and indeed, Darrell, that is something we should tell the whole world about, because God is in the process of making all things new. We are headed for that new creation, so we give thanks to God every time we tell the story, again and again.

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