



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion
94 – What Really Happened

Announcements:

11/15 @7:30 -

Prayer

11/16 @6:30 -

Grace Group

11/19 @8:30 -

Sunday School

11/19 @After Service

POTLUCK!

11/19 @6:00 -

Family Night

PSALM 8

ICE BREAKER: What is one thing you believed for a time that turned out to not be true?

READ: Matthew 27:54-61

When you are doing apologetics, one thing that everyone must deal with is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In my apologetics class this very subject took about a quarter of the whole class. This is because what NO ONE can deny is that something happened almost 2000 years ago around Jerusalem that caused the birth of the church and the start of Christianity. So for the one sharing their faith, the death and resurrection of Jesus become a source of hope and a tie to actual events in history. But for the one who desires to deny the faith, or try and explain away these things. There are some serious problems. On Sunday, we noted that Matthew brings up a few different groups as sort of “witnesses” to prove the case that Jesus was dead. Today we will be looking at the same thing, but from a slightly different angle. What is beautiful about how Matthew presents all this information is that the answers to those who would deny the resurrection of Christ are given long before the complaints are brought up!

One of the most common (though now looked down upon for reasons that we will see) ways that people would try and deny the resurrection is to say: he couldn't have been raised from the dead, because he was never really dead! This is often called the swoon theory. It goes like this: Jesus didn't fully die, he just swooned, and passed out and a few days later he got better. But Matthew in our text gives us two witnesses that would disprove that theory. The first is the Roman centurion. It is a little thing but note the verb that he uses to describe Jesus: This “WAS” the Son of God. The past tense indicates that he knows that he is dead. Here is a man trained for war, who has likely performed many crucifixions, so he is a sort of “expert witness”. He would be familiar with the sight of (verse 50) spirits being “yielded up”. In fact, his reputation and job depended on Jesus being really dead. But the second is Joseph. He meticulously and carefully prepared Jesus for burial. If at any time Jesus was NOT dead, he would have discovered it.

DISCUSS: Have you ever heard of the “Swoon Theory” before? Why is it important that we can give an answer?

Another theory that you might hear to explain away the resurrection is what is called the “Wrong Tomb” theory. The name here pretty much gives this one away. They say that the reason for the empty tomb with the stone rolled away is that there was confusion On easter morning and everyone showed up at the wrong tomb. While on one level this one doesn't even pass the most basic test, I mean really EVERYONE was at the wrong tomb?!? WE can also look to our text to see two witnesses that would disprove this one. The first is Joseph again. He would know exactly which tomb was his, because it was his. And the second was the women. WE can note that they will be the ones to first discover the empty tomb and in the last verse we read they are watching Jesus be buried and “sitting opposite the tomb”. In other words, they had been there once and knew *exactly* what it looked like. The chances they were at the wrong one are zero.

DISCUSS: Why do you think people are more willing to believe something crazy like the “wrong tomb” theory over admitting Jesus rose from the dead?

In the end it turns out people will go to great lengths to deny the truth that is staring them in the face. It is even more evidence to the thought we have noted now for three weeks. The Pharisees say: “come off the cross, and we will believe you then”. But here, in the resurrection of Jesus, the greatest miracle the world has ever known, their hearts are still hard. Matthew has given us witnesses to this miracle; he has unpacked the beauty and splendor of Jesus; he has recounted the depth of pain in the cross; he has given us all that we need to believe. And for that we should be grateful and believe!

DISCUSS: Next week we will will dive fully into the resurrection, but here, as we see his death and the witnesses to his death, how would you share the impact on your life?