

A SUNDAY THAT CHANGED ETERNITY
October 22, 2017 Morning Service
Matthew 28:1-7; 16-20

Josh McDowell who's going to be here with us early in 2018 for a weekend and preaching here on a Sunday morning has just released, I think it is, the third *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. He wrote *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Then he wrote the *New Evidence*. Now he's written the *Newer Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. It's just the update of the first book but they use some updated information. In that book Josh writes defending the faith as an apologist, giving his testimony as one who tried to disprove the gospel and then how he met Christ and Jesus radically changed him and saved him and gave him a ministry all over the world, especially to the coming generations as he shares.

In his book *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* on the chapter about the resurrection he entitles it, "Hoax or History?" Was the resurrection a hoax or is it historical? In there he quotes William Lane Craig and that apologist writes these words in that chapter. It is quite clear without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, His crucifixion would have silenced forever any hopes of His being the Messiah. The cross could have remained the sad and shameful end of the career of Jesus. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

It was on a Sunday morning that Mary ran to the tomb and we're going to read about it right here in Matthew 18. It was on a Sunday morning that He got up out of the grave. It was a Sunday morning that changed eternity. We read about that in Matthew 28, verses 1 through 7 and then skipping down to verse 16. Listen to this account of the first resurrection morning.

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week [that is Sunday], Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him 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 has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."¹

We read then that they left, met the disciples, and the disciples found themselves gathered in a room. Verse 16. *But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the*

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mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This is the first Sunday. It's the Sunday that changed eternity. This is the reason that we gather on the first day of the week. It became the practice of the early church in Acts and all through scripture they gathered various times but they came together on the first day, remembering the first time that they heard the story that Mary came, an angel rolled the stone away. The Bible says he sat on a stone. He had a rock pulpit. He sat on it and said, "You're looking for Jesus?" The guards fell like dead men, scared out of their mind. The angel said, "He's not here. He's risen from the dead. Behold, look at the place where He lay."

They didn't tell all the story there. I'm without doubt that Mary and Mary ran to look. They went in there. I've been in there. I've been in that place that marks the tomb of the Lord. Everybody goes in there. They go in and they look around like, "You know, He's going to be here. He really didn't get up." Well He did get up. They went in and grave clothes were there. They came out and when they came out they left quickly with fear and joy. Did you get that? They came with fear and joy. That's the way you worship, beloved. You come with godly fear but great joy when you come to the feet of our risen Lord. This first resurrection Sunday changed eternity forever.

This morning I want you to think with me about this Sunday that changed eternity. Then I want you to think about this Sunday, today. What is this day about? Well simply three things that I want to share with you. In that second point, some of you have never received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. I'm going to lead you in a prayer in a few minutes and I'm going to ask you to bow your life before heaven and ask God to step into your heart, forgive your sin, and make you a Christian. Some of you are sitting right here. You've been in church all your life but you're not a Christian man or woman. You're not saved. You're not assured of heaven. Today I want you to pray and call out unto the Lord.

Some of you have been saved but you've never been baptized. Today I want you to make that commitment that you're going to be baptized. Let it be this day that you make that stand and use that sign of biblical baptism. Some of you have never joined this church. I'm going to ask you right after this service to meet me right out there in the foyer. I'm going to go out there today and I'm going to greet you there. At the next step tables our people are going to pray with you. Out there today we're going to do it and I'm going to invite you to come. If you're in that Warrington church you're going to go out to that foyer and there you're going to do – that's the way you're going to do today.

I want you to look at me and look with me at the resurrection this morning. Three simple things I want you to see. Number one. Every Sunday is resurrection day. Every Sunday we come in here, it ought to be on your mind. He got up. He got up. He got up. All through the word of God we find the word of God. Just listen to it for four or five verses here that I want you to see. First of all in Romans 1:4: where the word of God said: *who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Then in Romans chapter 6 and verse number 5 where the Bible says: *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His [What? Say that word] resurrection.*

Then over in I Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 20 where the Bible says: *But now Christ has been raised from the dead [What was that word you had us shout awhile ago, Jon? He was raised from the dead. That ought to be a shout of that word right there. Let's read it again. But now Christ has been raised from the dead. Glory to God. He got up], the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.*

Then in I Peter chapter 1 and verse number 3 we find this great, great old text. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be [what?] born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Every Sunday is resurrection day. When you read the Bible you find the history of the world. There are five great mountain peaks in the Bible of history. The first mountain peak is creation. God spoke this world into existence. He looked down on the sixth day and He made man. Then He took from his side a rib and made woman. God made them male and female and that's all He made them. He made Adam. He made him. It's creation. Then the serpent came and in that creation He told them, "You should not eat of the tree." He marked that out and built a fence. "Don't eat of this tree, the knowledge, good and evil." But the serpent tempted. Eve gave in and Adam took the step. When Adam sinned we all sinned. When Adam fell the world changed. The first great mountain peak is that creation story with the creation and then the fall of man.

History goes through and we have the law. We have Israel. We come to that second great mountain peak and we call it Christmas but it's incarnation. When God left heaven and became flesh and dwelt among us. That second great mountain peak is in a little outback shed where God moved in and Jesus was born. We wait thirty some odd years for the third great mountain peak. It's called crucifixion. They took Him to an old cross. That's why we've got those crosses right there. They took him to a cross right there. They stretched Him out and nailed Him to that cross. He died for your sin. He died for my sin. He became our propitiation. He became our atonement.

The next mountain peak came three days later. They laid him in that borrowed tomb. The angel rolled a stone away. He got up. Somebody said they didn't move the stone to let Him out. They moved the stone to let us in. He didn't have any trouble getting out. Let me tell you, if God can create the heavens and the earth He ain't got any trouble getting out of a rock. He made the stone. Then that fifth great mountain peak of scripture, we're still waiting on it. It's coming.

I read this morning – I thought, Lord, we must be getting close to that fifth mountain peak for the rapture of the church and the coming of King Jesus because the Bible says in I John that when there are many antichrists you know the end is near. Have you ever lived in a time in your life when you see more antichrists? There is one called the antichrist but I John says there are many antichrists, those that deny God and deny His Son. We live in that day. I'm telling you, we're just waiting on a shout and a trumpet and the dead in Christ are going to rise first. Then all the lost Baptists will gather at Olive for a great – I don't know who's going to preach. I'm not showing up that day.

I'm telling you, friend, He's coming again. It is the fifth great mountain peak of history. He's going to call His children unto Himself. We're going to get up. My granddaddy's going to get up. Amen. We're going to go with him. The guy that made this pulpit, Jeff Bates, he's going to get up. He was just a young man when he died but he's a carpenter like his Lord. He's going to get up. God's going to call us and we're going to be drawn to Him like filings to a magnet. Are you ready? Are you ready? I hope you're ready.

Every day is resurrection day. We must never forget what our Lord has done for us and how God raised Him from the dead. Every time we come together in this room be reminded He is risen. He is risen. He is risen indeed. Every Sunday is resurrection day but now, number two, every Sunday is salvation day. Every Sunday that we come in this place. Every Sunday is salvation day.

Friend, you're in this room today and if you've never been saved, never been born again, never trusted, then you need to let today be the day. It's because there was a Sunday that changed eternity. This Sunday could change your eternity. You're lost today, hell-bound and bound for hell. You say, "Preacher, I don't think I'm going there." Friend, if you don't know Christ you are. You say, "Why would you say that?" Because unless you become a sinner, you'll never make heaven. You've got to know you're lost before you can find a redeemer. We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Every one of us. Everybody in this room has sinned. Every boy, every girl, every man and woman needs a Savior. Today, every Sunday is salvation day.

You say, "How does that happen?" Let me give you two scriptures just to show you that." First of all, in John's gospel chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, the Bible says: *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, [verse 13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* There are two words there as you

understand that Jesus died for you and that you're a sinner, you must receive Him and believe Him. When you receive Him, if you receive Him, He gives you the right to become the children of God if you believe in His name.

You must believe and receive the Lord Christ. How does that happen? Well you understand you're lost. You understand Jesus came and you believe. You believe. Let me tell you, friend, faith is not what you believe. No, no. Faith is not what you believe. It's what you act on. You can believe a lot of stuff but you really have not had faith until you act on what you say you believe. That that you believe becomes faith when you act on it. You put your full faith and trust in Christ.

I was just a little boy, ten years old. You've heard my testimony if you've heard me preach very much. I was sitting seven rows back on a Thursday at Vacation Bible School. Nolan Ford gave the gospel. That day I believed. I put my faith in Christ and I received Him as my Lord and as my Savior.

Next Sunday is the weekend of reformation. Martin Luther. I've been reading Eric Metaxas' book. It is a classic about how Luther, a Catholic monk, came to understand. He had come in his life to understand it was Christ alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, according to the word of God alone, to the glory of God alone. He needed no pope. He needed no counsel. He needed no church. All he needed was what the word of God said and the word of God said the just shall live by faith and Martin Luther cried out and said, "O God, save me." What did he do? He received and believed.

That's what you've got to do. You must receive and believe. Romans chapter 10, verses 9 and 10, that classic text tells us: *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

What you do you? You believe in your heart. You confess with your mouth. That's what you've got to do today. You've got to believe in your heart. Act by faith on it and confess with your mouth.

I want to pause right here in the middle of this sermon. I'm right at halfway done. I want to just stop right here. Let's just do eternal business. Just relax and look right here. You say, "Pastor, you've preached me in a corner. I don't know that I'm a saved man or woman. I don't know as a boy or a girl if I'm going to heaven when I die." Here's what I want you to do. I'm telling you, God'll save anybody that'll call on Him. I don't care who you are, what you've done. You read the word of God. There are four gentlemen who wrote gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. God saved all of them. Matthew was a government employee. God saved him. Mark was a missionary. God saved him. Luke was a professional. He was a doctor. God saved him. John was a fisherman. God saved him. I'm telling you, if He can save Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, He can save you.

I don't care what your background is. He'll save anyone of any stripe, of any color, of any ethnicity, any background. Shaun Pillay and I jokingly say now when we preach together, he'll say, "Somebody with a black neck or a red neck, either one, He'll save you." God loves you. You must receive Him and believe on His name. There are some boys and girls in here today that have never been saved. Boys and girls. You don't have to wait until Bible School to get saved if you're a little boy or girl. You can believe on the name of the Lord Jesus today. There's some mommas and daddies in here that have never believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There'll be a gentleman, he usually sits right up here. I've preached to him and preached to him. He'll be in the second service if he's in his seat today. He was 80 years old when he got saved. I'd all but call his name. I'd walk over here and just look and say, "Now listen to me. There are people in here that are out of this kind of background." I'd just talk about him. You ever try to help God out? I've tried to help God out. God don't need my help.

I'll never forget the Sunday he slipped out and he came right down. He got about two-thirds of the way down. I remember. I was standing there during the invitation. Jon was singing. I prayed in my heart. I said, "Dear God, don't let him go left and go to the bathroom." I said, "Lord, God help me." He wasn't going to the men's room. He was coming. I knew. He got saved coming down those steps. He believed. He was taking action. He came and gave his heart and life to Christ.

Oh what a great day it is when a man or a woman will say yes to Jesus. Some of you ought to say yes to Jesus today. You say, "Preacher, how do I do it?" Just ask him. Friend, there's just one way to get to heaven. You've got to run to the cross and to the God of the empty tomb.

I got a picture this week that I thought just really kind of summed it up. This is the cross down on the beach. Look at this. There's just one path leading up to the cross. I love that picture. Friend, you've got to get on the narrow way going to where Jesus died for you. Claim your forgiveness and run to the cross.

Somebody said to me this week, they said, "You know, there's going to come a day when they'll take that cross down." They may do it. They may take that cross down one day off Pensacola Beach. Let me tell you, they can't take my Jesus off the throne of eternity. Amen. I haven't got my faith in some cement cross down on the beach but it's there as a memorial, as a picture. Dear friend, you need to walk that path to Calvary's cross and ask Jesus to step into your heart. He's alive today and He, with nail-pierced hands is saying, "Come to me. Come to me. I've come to you. Now come to me." If God is calling you then today I want you to pray.

Here's what I want us to do. I'm going to ask everybody in this place just to take a breath before I come to the last part of this message. Would you just bow your head with me right now? I'd like everybody just to pray. We're going to pray right now for people to get saved. If you've already been saved, then I want you to thank God that

you've been saved but if you've never been saved and you want to be saved today – you say, “Preacher, I wouldn't even know what to say.” Well I want to lead you in a prayer. If you'll pray these words with me and mean it in your heart, I'm telling you, God'll save you today if you'll call on Him. If you believe in your heart, confess with your mouth, pray these words with me. Just say this. You can say it in your heart or you can say it out loud.

Lord Jesus. Just say those words. Lord Jesus, I admit I am a sinner. I am in need of a Savior. I invite you to be mine. I invite you to come into my life and live through me. Lord, I receive you by faith and I will live for you as you give me strength the rest of my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Now you look right here. That balcony around, on this ground floor, at home, wherever you might be watching this service. If you've called on the name of the Lord with a prayer like this or this prayer, I'm telling you, God saved you today. If you'll call on Him. That's what you do as a child. You come and say, “O God.” Then after He saves us, He asks us to tell it and not be ashamed. Here's what I'm going to ask you to do. In just a few minutes, Jon's going to come sing a song and when he does I'm going to walk down this aisle and I'm going out there in the foyer. If you prayed that prayer with me today, I want you to come tell me that. Then I'm going to give you to one of the folks at the next steps tables and they're going to pray with you and take some information. We're going to sign you up to be baptized and take that next step.

Every Sunday is resurrection day. Every Sunday is salvation day and for some of you today is your day of salvation. It's the day that you're believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you can be saved. You be saved for eternity on this given Sunday. Every Sunday is resurrection day. Every Sunday is salvation day. If you've believed on Him, come see me right out there. You say, “Preacher, I'm not sure but I want to come talk to somebody.” Then come see me right out there.

This week I came home on Thursday. I looked out. We have a little pond and I thought I saw somebody out there. There was a young man. Now I just went on about my business. In a few minutes I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door and he said, “Sir, do you own this pond?” I said, “I do. Would you like to help me pay the taxes on it?” He said, “Well I didn't see a fence or whatever and I was around on the other side but then when I saw you, I thought I better ask. Could I fish in your pond?” I said to that young man. I know his name. I said, “I'll make a deal with you. You fish my pond today. You hear me preach on Sunday. We'll trade. How's that?” He's a new student at the University of West Florida. He said, “I'll be there.” I don't know if he's in this service or coming to the 11:00 or he's a liar. We made a deal. I kept my part of the deal.

Let me tell you, friend, God kept His part of the deal. If you'll call on His name, He'll save you. He'll save you at 9:30. He'll save you at 11:00. He'll save you at 3:00. He'll save you at the 5:30 service. If you'll call on His name, God will save you. You'll

let this be the Sunday that's a salvation day for you. Come tell me that out in the foyer. Let's do that.

Every Sunday is resurrection day. Every Sunday is salvation day. But now number three, very quickly I want you to see. Every Sunday is celebration day. Yes. Amen. Every Sunday is celebration day. What do we celebrate? We celebrate the salvation and the growing of people in faith. Listen to the word of God in Romans chapter 6, beginning in verse 3 where the Bible says: *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

You see, friend, after you get saved you're to be baptized. Baptism. This text is talking about when you are baptized in the spirit, that God immerses you into Christ. When you get saved, he literally puts you into Christ. He baptizes you. He immerses you into the life of the Lord Jesus. He uses the picture of water baptism. Romans 6 is talking about spirit baptism. But after you've been immersed into Christ and you've been saved, then you should be baptized in water. You ought to come in a place like this or down in the gulf or in a pond. Somewhere you should be baptized. You don't get baptized before you get saved. You don't get baptized so you are saved. You get baptized after you are saved as a sign and a symbol and a celebration that when you're put in the water you celebrate Jesus died for me. Glory. We'll say glory. You don't say glory while you're in there. We'll do the talking. You do the holding of the breath. When we bring you out of the water then you can say glory.

Now you'll notice it. They're not in this service but they'll be in the next service. The girls from the Charis House. I can always tell when one of the girls from the Charis House is new and gets saved and gets baptized because everybody applauds nicely but when one of their clan gets saved and baptized this crowd over here celebrates. You'll hear hooting and hollering and shouting and clapping louder than everybody else because that's one of their sisters. I'm just here to tell you, that's the way we ought to do for everybody that gets baptized. We ought to shout. It ought to be a day of celebration. Somebody ought to say – what's that word again, Jon? Say it loud. Glory. Yeah, that's the word we ought to say. When they come out, they'll say glory. What happened? Well they only missed hell and made heaven. Somebody ought to shout. That's enough to make you happy, isn't it?

You see, Sunday is a day of celebration. Amen. When we are baptized. He said it right here in the text. In Matthew 28 we read it. He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, of every ethnicity, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." That word baptize means to plunge or dip. It doesn't mean to sprinkle or pour. The mode is important. The only man that ought to be baptized is a saved man. The only mode that ought to be used is complete immersion and the only message is that Jesus died for you and He was raised from the dead. The

message is not that baptism saves you. It is that you've been saved and you are now celebrating that. You come to confess publicly.

I'm amazed how people when they get engaged they don't mind telling it. They put the ring on Facebook. We have a wedding and people will come and they'll cry. I see fathers, grown men come cry.

I have one goal in a wedding. Only one. It's to make the father of the bride cry. I'm not successful a hundred percent of the time but I am 98 percent of the time. Bobby Taylor's working down in Warrington today. Old Bobby, he stood down here when we were going to marry his daughter. He thought he wasn't going to cry. He stood there like a rock. He said, "He ain't going to make me cry." Well he didn't know I talked to his momma. I got ready. I said, "There's one person that's absent from this wedding today." Bobby's daddy was a great deacon in our church. We wouldn't have the sports complex if it wasn't for Bob, Sr. because he aggravated me to death until we did it.

I had Bob, Sr.'s Bible in my hand that day and his son didn't know it. I said, "I thought we'd let Bob, Sr. be a part." When I opened that Bible, he just busted up, you know. I mean I had his deceased daddy's Bible right there in front of me. He had to cry. Then I cried. Then the bride cried and everybody got mad because I had everybody crying. But you know, sometimes crying's good, isn't it? It releases something in you.

What he said, that they left there with fear and joy. That's how it works. For when you come to Jesus, there's fear and joy. You're frightened. You're scared you're going to say that wrong thing but then when your burden is lifted at Calvary, oftentimes people cry. You don't have to cry to get saved but I sure like it when they do. There's just something about that release that says, "Lord, we just give you our life." It's good. You go public. That's what celebratory baptism is. You go public. I'm following Jesus. I don't care what anybody says, thinks, does, I'm on the King's side. Hallelujah. It's celebration. It's also connection to family because when you're baptized, then you come to be a part of a family. It's the church family. It's God's big family but then there's a localized family called Olive. Some of you today have been saved, never baptized, and you ought to come right out there today and tell me, "Pastor, I'm ready."

Some of you have been saved and you have been baptized but you've never put your membership in this church. Why do you not do that? What are you waiting on? You say, "Well, I don't have to have it to go to heaven." No you don't but, friend, you ought to identify with a local group so that you can come under the authority of the church, be a part, and go to serve as a part of the body of Christ. Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Let someone find you and know you. Encourage you that you can serve alongside.

This is a great day and we celebrate when people join. In the worship guide you'll see the list of people that have come professing their faith. Now we've added a new listing. We'll put a name on there like if Helen Walden came, her name will be

listed. Then if somebody came and they joined today over at the Warrington Campus, we'll just put out beside there, they've joined Olive at the Warrington Campus. We'll join together and that way you'll see that printed in the worship guide week by week. We celebrate about that. Today's a day of celebration. Somebody ought to give a high five when somebody joins a church and comes for baptism. Say glory to God.

I see people rejoice over the weirdest stuff. Don't you? They're just odd things. People rejoice and shout and cry. I often say people go to a football game and paint their body, holler, and carry on for a school they never attended for a boy they don't know over a game they never played. It's amazing to me. But you know the Lord and these people know you. It's just right. It's just right. There was a Sunday that changed eternity. Jesus got up from the dead.

This morning I was over in my office. I have an oil painting in my office over a communion table. That communion table is out of the First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee where my wife got saved. When they were redoing the church her family bought the communion table. It's there. Up over that is an oil painting that one of our deacons bought for me in Jerusalem when we were there. There was a painting. I looked at it and I drooled over it and then I saw the price tag. I said, "I'm not sure I want it that bad." But when I got home I found out one of our gentlemen had bought it and had it shipped home to the pastor. It's a precious gift. All it is, is the garden tomb. It's a rock wall and there's a few flowers and there's a little door and a stone that's rolled away.