

Go!

Jonathan K. Dodson | Matthew 28 | April 28, 2019

We just finished up a series on the *Spirit-Filled Church*. What's next? It's important to see a Spirit-Filled Church doesn't focus *on being filled but on being sent*. We're given the Spirit to Go. At the end of each Gospel, Jesus gives instructions for mission, each providing a different angle on mission of the church. Today, Matthew 28: *the Marys, Guards, & Disciples*.

The Marys

As light broke on the third day, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus, go to see the tomb of Jesus. But they don't just go to *see*; it's not the typical word for sight. The word means *to look intently*. When we visit the grave of a loved one, we don't go just to see the headstone but to savor the person. Suddenly, an angel descends wrapped in lightening: a Gandalf the White, a Thor reborn. His landing ripples the earth. All are struck with fear. The guards shake like the earth, rigid as death. But *not* the women; their fear is different. The angel relieves them, "[Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified](#)" (5). How is their fear different? Let's see. Angel shows them the empty tomb, informs them Jesus has risen, and tells them [to go quickly and tell his disciples he has risen](#) (7) They *go* and on the way they're interrupted by the risen Christ! How do they respond? [They take hold of his feet and worshipped him](#) (9). How is their fear different? There's a kind of fear that embraces authority, and there's a fear that rejects authority. The two different fears sent the parties in two different directions. The guards run from the resurrection; the women run to the resurrection. Guards are seized by the Christ event; the Marys seize Christ himself! One is worship; the other not. *So what's the difference?* One fear trembles at the *consequences* of the risen Christ; the other fear trembles at the *opportunity* to see the risen Christ. There's a kind of person for whom Jesus is a threat, and another person for whom Jesus is joy. When we explain the gospel to our children—that to be accepted by Jesus we have to trust him as Savior and King—a couple of children responded by saying they want Jesus as Savior (forgiveness) but don't want Jesus as King (authority). They didn't want to relinquish control of their lives; they did want to avoid the *consequences* of sin. There are people who say they want Jesus, but what they mean is they want avoid the

consequences of a guilty conscience. They want forgiveness not authority; Savior not King. They use Jesus but don't worship Jesus. Do you want forgiveness without authority? *Then, it's not Jesus that you want.* Jesus doesn't come in halves. Then there are the people who worship Jesus. How can you tell? They welcome his authority, which means relinquishing your own. If you're seeking to define yourself, adopting your own views, obeying when it suits you, then you're really operating under an alternative authority. But if you're going back to Jesus and his Scriptures, seeking his views and to be defined by him, then you're under a better authority. To be a follower of Jesus, you've got to deny yourself and take Jesus as Savior and King. Something we have to come back to over and over. Do you need to reexamine how you're relating to Jesus? Are you using not worshipping him? Now *why* should we do it? Look back at how Jesus greets them. "**Greetings!**" This a poor translation; the word actually means rejoice; it's an imperative. It's not Hello, or hey guys, it's *Whatss upppp!* It's a call to joy. Fear of Jesus is always mixed with joy. The Marys were already onto this: they went **in fear and great joy (8).** *Joyful* reverence. True worship. They aren't there to see Jesus; they're there to *savor* Jesus. Not just to use him, but to serve him. Jesus didn't need to appear to them. The angel has already told them the same thing Jesus tells them. But Jesus intercepted them anyway. Why? Because he loved these women; he values women; he cares about you and wants you to find joy in the shade of his strength. Will you embrace his authority? It's for your joy! Are you running toward or running away? What's proof we're moving toward Jesus? Obedience! What kind? The angel says, *Go tell.* Jesus, *Go tell.* Reverent joy joins Jesus. *Knowing his strength and love/authority and forgiveness, they go tell.*

The Guards

There's an opposing movement, "**While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place (11).**" The Marys move forward in obedient joy, while the guards move away to avoid consequences. What consequences? Well, its interesting they don't go to Pilate, their Roman authority. Instead, they go to Jewish authorities. Probably because they feared *their authority*—the consequences of failing Pilate in guarding the tomb. Or perhaps they feared being mocked for their story about an angel? Whether it was their peers or their superiors, they feared

the inferior authority. Revering the wrong authority has a distorting effect; sends you in the wrong direction. Fearing President Trump, Sarah Huckabee distorted the news about how FBI agents felt about James Comey. She lied and lost credibility. When *we* hold our *superiors* higher than Christ, we compromise our moral commitments. Ever inflate the numbers, fluff the resume to impress a big client or boss? Or we can hold *peers* in higher regard than Christ. When the current of gossip about your company or boss begins swirl, do you so fear the disapproval of your peers you go along with it? Do you blend in with the darkness or stay close to the light? When we hold Christ in high regard, we're joyfully empowered under the sun of his approval to do and say what's right, to *go with the good news.* Reverent joy obeys. The right authority has a beautifying effect. But the guards take a bribe, enter into collusion with Jewish authorities, and propagate a grand deceit. They take "a sufficient sum of money" (12) in exchange for circulating a lie about his disciples absconding with the body of Jesus. What is your "sufficient sum of money"? What are you selling Jesus out for? Is it worth it? Does it make good on its promise of joy? Now what about this resurrection story? *If the body was stolen, why didn't it ever resurface? If the resurrection was a ruse, then why suffer for it? Peter crucified upside down, Stephen stoned to death, countless martyrs. Plus, the idea of a Jew being raised from the dead in the middle of history was just as inconceivable to Jews and Romans then as it is to us today. Stealing a body and claiming resurrection would have done them no favors—unless it was true!* If it is true, the reverent joy has touched every continent!

The Disciples

Finally, the news reaches the disciples and they rendezvous with Jesus on a mountain in Galilee. The disciples respond in two ways, And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted (17). Some worship; some *doubt*. There's room for doubt with Jesus. He doesn't scold them or withdraw; *he moves toward them*. It's as if he's saying doubt in my presence, not absence. Don't act as though doubt is just intellectual; it's relational (we're doubting *Jesus*); not just rational spiritual (we're doubting *God*). Doubt with Jesus. Drawing near, Jesus doesn't say one thing to the doubters and another to the worshippers. The call is the same for both: Go...and make disciples of all nations (19). Why? Because Jesus has *all* authority in heaven and on earth. Everyone needs to get in on this. To give us a lesser

mission would be unkind and untrue. Revering the wrong authority distorts us, but *revering the right authority beautifies us*, not just us, *all nations*. Because Mark & Philippa Smith went to Dublin, Africans, Indians, Irish are enjoying Jesus. Because Dwight & Jessica Bernier went to Montreal, Quebecois and Canadians are enjoying Jesus. Who will enjoy Jesus because you went, because you told, because you embraced his mission to make disciples? Going is proof we're moving toward Jesus. He sends us: *go, baptize, teach*. I had a young woman tell me she couldn't disciple her Hindu her friend because she didn't know enough. Someone else they couldn't baptize because they weren't a pastor. Another they don't have enough experience. All three made the same mistake: that Jesus sends us in the authority of our knowledge, our titles, our experience—but he doesn't. He sends *in his authority*, "[All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me](#)" (18). We are sent in the authority of Jesus, not the authority of our wisdom, experience, or knowledge. Now if you lack it, seek it. Study, grow, tell. But don't wait to become an authority; you have the authority. Not only that, you also have Jesus, "I will be with you till the end of the age." Joyful reverence, Savior and King, strength and love. What will your life look like with *this* authority at your back and Jesus by your side? Let's go: joyful reverence baptizing and teaching in *his* name.