

Message. The Weekend That Changed the World. Matthew 28:1-20

I am so glad that you are here today celebrating the most wonderful happening ever. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I am also glad that we didn't resort to bribery to get you here.

Evidently there was at least one church in America that did so last Easter Sunday and intends doing so again this year. The Lindenwald Baptist Church was disturbed at the low numbers it was getting to its Easter Sunday service and decided to draw names at the service, to award \$500 each to a member of the congregation and a guest.

Pastor Randy Moore says the southwest Ohio church had hoped for 1,000 worshippers last year, when it made the offer for the first time. It packed in 1,140 — more than double the usual Sunday attendance of around 500. Moore says a crew had to direct traffic in the parking lot.

Can you imagine the anticipation followed by disappointment that the majority of worshipers probably experienced that day.

Thankfully we don't have to depend upon chance....or upon a gift valid only for the few. The message of Easter Sunday is that life eternal is now available as a gift to all who put their trust in Him who died and rose again. It is an amazing gift that has come about through an amazing event—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The joy we share this morning is not created by being in this building together, but by being here to give our praise and honour to the One who through His death and resurrection changes the lives forever of all who reach out to put their faith in Him.

And such an act of Faith is not easy, for no-one else has ever risen from the dead in the way that Jesus did. He conquered death not just to die again sometime. When He rose from the dead He took from death any power it had to ever touch Him again. Prior to Jesus, death was like a door. Once you went through, it was barred shut against you. The judgment lay ahead and there was no going back through that door into this life. But Jesus, in His resurrection smashed that door, doorposts and all. He had already endured the judgment, although He Himself was without sin and shame; and now He was also able to come and go into this world as He pleased.

He did so with His disciples. In one way or another I believe He has been doing so ever-since. And the message He brought back with Him is a most triumphant one. That He has won the victory for us. That when we belong to Him we need not fear judgment, for He has made for us a pathway through judgment into the Father's presence. There we will be treated as sons and daughters of the King. And before that time He will be constantly with us, changing our lives, and using us to touch the lives of others.

This is the message that Romans 10:9-11 proclaims so clearly:-

'That 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. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹ As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

I read this week that there are over 100 books in print with titles that include the phrase.....That Changed the World. Here are some examples:-

Gunpowder: The History of the Explosive That Changed the World

Mayflower: The Voyage That Changed the World

Model T Ford: The Car That Changed the World

Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World

The Twist: The Story of the Song and Dance That Changed the World

Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color That Changed the World

You might wonder how the twist or mauve changed the world, but there is another book on the list that really is about a world-changing subject: The Weekend That Changed the World: The Mystery of Jerusalem's Empty Tomb.

That's what today's service has been all about. The resurrection—an act so incredible that it can't be ignored. Through the ages people have endeavored to prove that it didn't happen, and have failed. Others have been willing to die rather retract their belief in a risen Lord. On the basis of the resurrection many billions of people have testified to changed lives and also to a changed world, in which they have a part to play for Jesus. A battle to fight. A message to give. A love to show.

The empty grave has changed my world. Has it changed yours?

