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The concert is at an end. The last notes of a thoroughly enjoyable evening have just been sounded, so what do you do? What's your reaction? You rise to your feet and give the performer a standing ovation, don't you? That is the best reaction to a great concert.

And what do you do when you are watching your favourite football team and they are behind by three points with 30 seconds to go on the clock? The ball goes out to the winger, who beats one, beats a second, kicks ahead and with an amazing turn of speed grounds the ball before anyone else? He's scored the winning try. What your reaction to that? Well you jump to your feet, you throw your arms in the air, you let out a scream, you do a number of high fives with those around you, that's an appropriate reaction to a match winning try.

But what if you find yourself at a graveside, overwhelmed with grief for the person whom you have known and loved for the past few years is now dead. Your there when an angel appears, rolls back the stone and says Jesus is not here, he is risen from the dead! He has done what the OT predicted and what he had promised to do, to come back to life? How to you respond to that? What is the most appropriate reaction to the resurrection?

Do you pump your fist, give him a standing ovation or send in Sherlock Holmes? Are you frightened by such raw power of overcome with joy? Do you break out the easter eggs, put on another couple of hot cross buns, enjoy your long weekend, go camping? Or do you say I am not going to believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my hand in his side?

How should we react to the resurrection? What is the appropriate response if Jesus really has come back from the dead? Now this is an important question because we Christians insist on reading the Easter story at least once every year. We press the rewind button so to speak and transport ourselves as in a time machine back to the empty tomb. What does God want us to do? How do we properly respond to the maybe the most significant event in all of history? Well Matthew will give us five possible responses. And the first is

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1. Fear (verses 1-8a)

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men."

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You get that? The guard's quake with fear. There they are just minding their own business and making sure no one steals Jesus body when they are hit by an earthquake. That's the second quake in three days. For when Jesus dies, Matthew records that the earth shock & the rocks split & the tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy men were raised to life. And now this is not just an aftershock but another full on earthquake. But this time the

graves are not open to get the dead out but to get the witnesses in.

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Now it would seem to me that fear is an appropriate response. Fear, raw fear. Before you is an angel, a heavenly being. Before you is an empty tomb, one that should be filled. These men are now face to face with the supernatural. In front of you is a power much greater than you. Yes fear appears the right reaction to the resurrection.

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For the guards & the women! ⁵“The 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,”

The women too are afraid. This is beyond their experience. They are in the presence of someone way beyond their pay grade. God has raised Jesus from the dead. The tomb is not empty it has been emptied! They suspected that Jesus was not just a normal prophet but now for the first time they realise they are in the presence of God. And they are full of fear.

Have you ever felt that sort of fear? Have you stood before the Lord in all his power and might and realised that you are a sinner. He is holy and you are unholy. He is strong and you are weak. He is God and you are just a man, a woman, a child? Have you?

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Isaiah did, didn't he? In Isaiah 6 he sees a vision of God's majesty and he cries out “Woe to me, I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty?”

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And Peter did something similar. He heard Jesus preach from his boat, he was then sent out in that same boat to fish and after fishing all night without success, Jesus comes and says throw your nets over this side. And when they do, the boat was about to sink because of all the fish they had caught. And so, what does Peter do? He kneels before Jesus and says to him “Go away from me, Lord I am a sinful man.”

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Fear. It is a common response when God steps into this world and changes the course of history. And as we are transported back to the emptied tomb, do you feel that sort of fear? Should you and I be afraid? For the risen Lord is with us today. The one who has all authority and power is watching over every part of our lives. Not just when we are in Church but when we are on the computer, listening to music, spending time with your family, playing sport. Doesn't Paul say to us in the book of Philippians, chapter 2 that we should “*Continue to work out our salvation **with fear and trembling***”? Doesn't the wise man say in the OT that “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*”?

Fear. Awe. Wonder. Amazement. Are all good responses to the resurrection. Jesus is alive. God's power is awesome. Without the death and resurrection of Jesus we would be consigned for hell for all eternity. Let that sink in this morning. Let it give us the wake up call that we all need. God is real. He is not to be messed with. And the risen Lord is speaking to us today through his word. So one response is fear but the next response is

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2. Joy (verse 8)

⁸“So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with **joy**, and ran to tell his disciples.” Fear but not complete fear, not paralysing fear. The women are also filled with joy. Pure, unadulterated joy. Jesus was dead, they were there when they crucified my Lord. And yet now he is alive. Yes alive. “Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.”

He is alive not just spiritually because they grasp his feet. Not just emotionally, not just intellectually but he has a physical body. Not just resuscitated. Not just reincarnated. But resurrected. They came to the grave side to pay their respects. They came laden with spices to stop the stench of death taking over. They came full of sadness, full of misery, absolutely devastated. And they leave full of joy. Joy.

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Do you get it? Jesus has defeated death. Do you get it? Death is not the end? Do you get it? Jesus has defeated Satan? Do you get it? Jesus has defeated the best the world has thrown at him? Do you get it? What Jesus said about himself and God and salvation was true. He is the way, the only way to God. He is the truth, he speaks the truth about God. He is the life and you and I can have eternal life through him. But only through Him.

We have now reached the pinnacle of history. The most amazing man in history has just had the most amazing death in history and now he is the first one ever to break through the barrier of death and live forever. Surely we can't hear that sort of good news without a smile breaking open across our faces? Surely we are not so worn down by our circumstances that we can't feel a surge of joy pulsating through our body?

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You know I get great joy when I am sitting around the dinner table with my family and even greater joy when there is also my wider family. I can feel the fist pump coming when I go on to the news and I hear my sporting team has just won. There is a surge of adrenalin when I am out shopping and I snag myself a bargain. But this is taking joy to a new level, isn't it?

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CS Lewis talks about this sort of joy when he became a Christian. In fact his conversion experience was put into a book & its title was “Surprised by Joy”. The philosopher & scientist Blaise Pascal, recorded his conversion with these words, “From about half-past ten in the evening until about half-past twelve ... FIRE ... God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and not of the philosophers & scholars. Certainty. Certainty. Feeling. Joy. Peace.” He never wanted to forget what happened so he wrote down his experience and sewed into the inside of his coat.

Was that your experience when you first trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? Is that still your experience today? Is Easter Sunday the most joyous day of the year for you? Have you set aside this weekend to experience the sorrow and the joy, the pain and the healing, the fear and the comfort, the doubt and the certainty?

Fear will motivate us to do some things for the Lord but joy will motivate us to do even more things for him. Jesus is alive, well and truly alive. He has defeated death. I will one day defeat death. His resurrection gives me faith and hope and love. Life is now full of joy.

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3. Fear, Joy and Worship (verses 9-10, 17)

⁹“Suddenly 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.”

Can you imagine the thoughts of the women when they see the risen Jesus? Do we dare touch Him? Is He real? Isn't this perhaps some delusion, some grief-induced mirage? And so their hands, reach for His feet. And as they make contact they realize, this is no mirage. This is no hallucination. He is real. He lives. And how do they react? They worship Him.

Now let's remember who these women are, they are Jews. Jews who for the whole of their lives have believed in the one God. Just one God. There weren't gods of the air and gods of fire or sun gods. There was just one God. They knew the first commandment, the very first command was you should have no other gods before me. But now they worship Jesus.

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They worship him. They bow down before him. They grab hold of his feet. They hold onto him. They acknowledge that he is worthy. They praise and thank Him. Yes fear is appropriate and so is joy but surely this is the best reaction so far to the resurrection.

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And that is why we are here this morning isn't it? To worship the Lord, Father Son and Holy Spirit. And we know that worship is not just a one hour a week thing, it is a whole of life thing. Romans 12 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Worship is not just offering our time to God or our money or our praise or our prayers. It is offering ourselves. Mind, body, soul, spirit. The whole kit and kaboodle. Nothing held back. Nothing kept just for myself or family. “All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give. I surrender all. I surrender all.” In worship. To the one who gave us his one and only son.

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But I want you to notice something about this sort of worship. Go with me to verse 16.

¹⁶“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”

To worship God, you don't have to have perfect faith. You are allowed to have your doubts. Why didn't God answer my prayers? Why didn't he help me in my time of need? Why didn't he rescue my loved one? You don't have to have perfect faith but you need to have real faith. And I know that I am getting a head of myself here but the disciples doubted even though they knew the resurrection was true. You see they weren't instantly transformed into spiritual giants. And Jesus knew that. But he still sent them out to be his disciples. He still called upon them to obey. And as they were filled with the Holy Spirit & as they put their faith into action, God's presence took away their doubts.

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4. Pretend (verses 11-15)

But let us not be naive enough to think that the only reaction to the resurrection was worship and joy and fear. For yes the women experienced the earthquake, saw the angel,

found the empty tomb and they believed. But the guards also saw the exact same things. They saw but they didn't see, if you get my drift.

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¹¹ "While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened." The guards were in a very sticky situation. They were there to stop the disciples from stealing the body. But there was no way they could stop an angel or even God Himself from emptying the tomb. And the penalty of such a failure was execution. That was how serious an offense it was. To fall asleep on guard duty. To allow someone to overcome a Roman unit. So what do they do? Go to the Romans no, that would mean they are in big trouble.

So they go to the Jewish leaders. ¹² "When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night & stole him away while we were asleep.'" ¹⁴ "If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ "So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day."

Remember the chief priests had said to Jesus while on the cross, if you come down from the cross we will believe in you? Well now he had come out of the empty grave and they still don't believe in Him. Now the guards have seen an angel and to protect their own skins they take the money and run. Amazing isn't it. You can have all the proof in the world and sometimes it doesn't make a speck of difference.

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For the Jewish leaders, they don't want to give up their power, their influence, their reputation and acknowledge the facts. For the guards they don't want to lose their security so they become blinded by a bribe. And today people do the exact same thing. They don't believe because they don't want to believe. They allow money to blind them or power or convenience or family.

Their reaction to the resurrection is to believe a lie, live a lie. Better to celebrate a chocolate giving bunny. Easier to take a four day long weekend off work. Maybe come to Church. Yes, call myself a Christian. But there is no fear of God. There is no joy at the resurrection. There is no offering of ourselves in worship 24/7. What a slap in the face to God. What a tragedy to bite the hand that feeds us. We wouldn't do that today, would we? We wouldn't allow money to blind us? Or tradition? Or doubts? Or laziness? Or busyness? Would we?

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5. Make Disciples (verses 16-20)

So is the end? No Matthew records one last reaction to the resurrection. ¹⁸ "Then Jesus came to them & said, "**All** authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ "Therefore go and make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you **always**, to the very end of the age."

This is Matthew's final word. These are Jesus last words in this gospel. So it must be important. Critical even. And there is one tiny word repeated four times in these final verses. The word **all**. All authority has been given to Jesus. Make disciples of all nations.

Teaching them all that I have command you. And I will be with you always. All authority. All nations. All I have taught. Always. It's pretty comprehensive, isn't it? That's because this is the best response of all. The disciples are to become disciple makers.

Jesus is sending them outwards. They must Go. He has already sent them out of Jerusalem to Galilee of the Gentiles. But they need to go further across Judea, into Samaria, and eventually into all the world. The whole world. You see Jesus has died for our sins. Jesus has been risen to bring us eternal life. And that message is not just for the good people. It is not just for those who were brought up in the faith. It is for all people. All people.

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And so the job of the disciple is now to become a disciple maker. The apprentice becomes the tradesman. The ball is passed to those who believe that Jesus is Lord and they now need to run with it. The baton has been handed over and they are to pass it on to others. They are to make disciples.

Not just to fear or to be filled with joy or even to worship Jesus but to make disciples. As you go out you are to make disciples. As people respond to the message of discipleship they are to be baptized and you are to teach them everything that Jesus taught us. Actually, that is not what Jesus says. We are to teach them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded them. Having been thoroughly disciplined themselves they are to go out and disciple other.

And that is not a call to just the disciples or the pastors or the leaders of the Church it is a call to us all. We are to make disciples. Not just preach the gospel and hope people are converted but they need to be changed as well. Not just grow in the faith ourselves we are called to bring others to faith and help them also grow in their faith.

And we can only do that because all authority has been give to Jesus. And Jesus is going to be with us to the end of the age. It is Jesus who will do all the converting. It is Jesus that will do all the growing. But he works thorough us as we seek to make disciples.

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Evangelist Sam Chan likes to point to the picture of Elijah in the OT. The fire comes from heaven after Elijah has built the altar. The fire is from God. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. The Holy Spirit is unleashed on the world. God keep his promises. Only God can send the fire but we need to build the altar. As we go we make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey Jesus.

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That is the best reaction to the resurrection. To make the truth know. To make Jesus known. To desire that the work that God has done in you might set alight someone else's life. The fear we might have for the Lord might be contagious to someone else. And that our joy might spread like wild fire. So that more and more might worship Jesus.

That's the good news of the resurrection. The tomb is empty. The Lord has risen. His Word is true. His promises real. His death satisfactory. His atonement applied. His obedience perfect. His service acceptable. His victory completed. Jesus lives, and because He lives we who believe in Him will also live. Jesus rose and because He rose we who believe in Him will also one day rise. That is the good news given to us to be shared with the world, the whole world. So how will you react to the good news of the resurrection today?