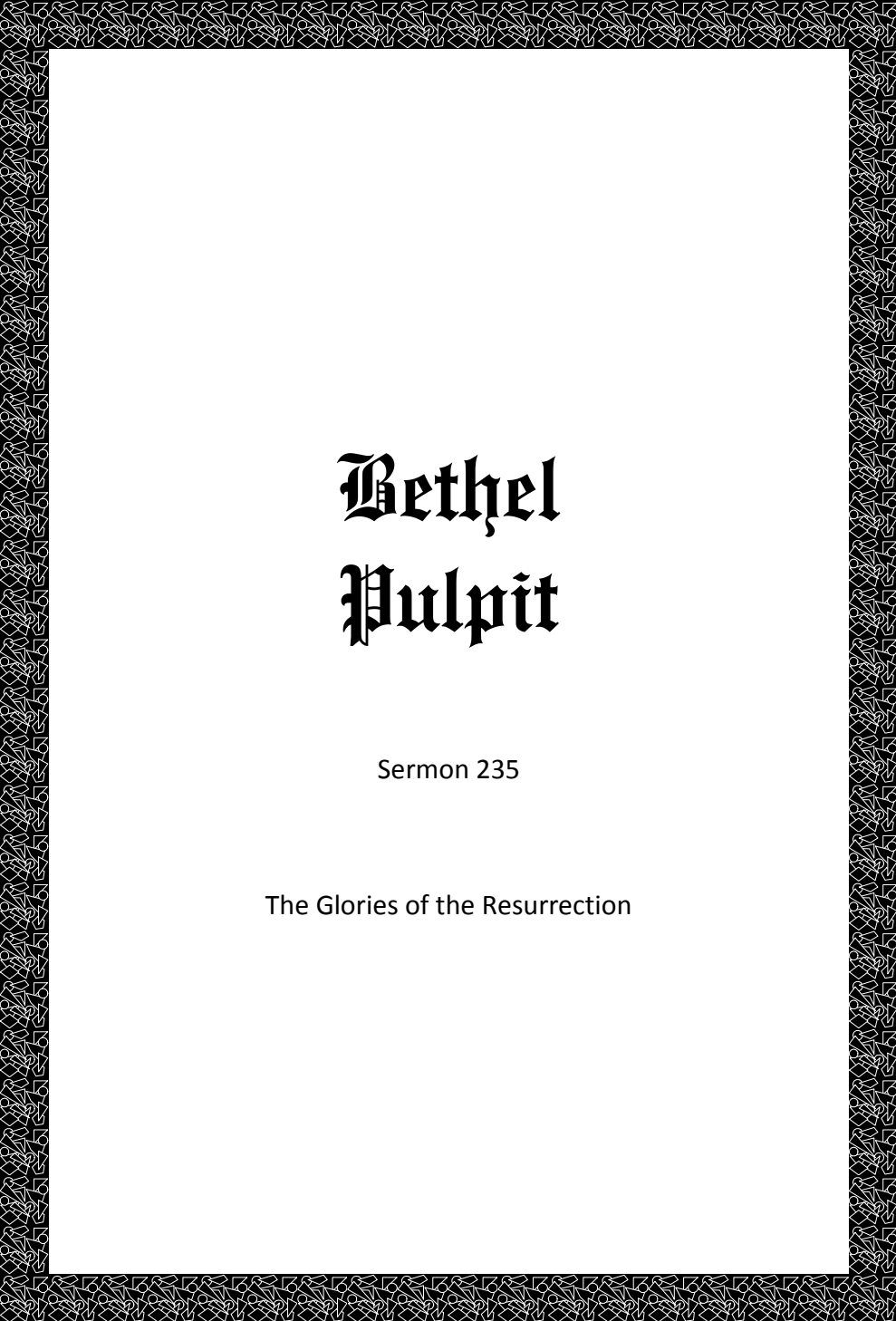




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 235

The Glories of the Resurrection

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 11th April, 2004 (Easter Sunday)**

Text: *"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28. 5, 6).*

None of us can ever truly realise the awful darkness, sorrow and gloom that rested on the Lord's immediate followers after His death. Beloved friends, you and I this morning look back two thousand years. We know the end, the glories of the resurrection. They did not. "As yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." It must have seemed the end of everything to them. The immediate disciples, these godly women, had they been deceived? Were they completely wrong? It seemed as if Satan had triumphed, as if the powers of hell had triumphed. It must have been one of the darkest days in the history of the whole human race, that day between the Lord's death and His glorious resurrection.

O but what a wonderful thing we see in these godly women! If you want to know what the sweet constrainings of the love of Christ are, you see it in these godly women – the last to leave the cross, the last to leave the sepulchre, the first there in the morning of the first day of the week. They did not understand it; they were broken-hearted; but they could not keep away. Something was drawing them. The love of Christ was constraining them. "When it was yet dark." So early in the morning these women were going along to the sepulchre. Love overcomes everything, the love of Christ. Love is stronger than death. So it pulled them toward the grave of the Lord Jesus. The most they could expect was to honour the lifeless body of their late Lord and Master. Instead they met with a risen Saviour. I could not help keep thinking of that word: "To seeking souls He always gives more than their hearts expect." Well, these were seeking souls. They did not know what they were seeking. They were sorrowing because their Lord had gone, but they were seeking souls and they were most blessedly given more than their hearts could expect. So it is today. So it will ever be.

“The angel ... said ... Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus.” And the Lord knows who they are here this morning who have come truly seeking after a once-crucified, but now risen, exalted Saviour. Well, I do not know who you are, but the Lord does: how few, how many, whether the old ones who have never really found Him, or perhaps some of you young ones, and perhaps some seeking the Saviour for the first time. But blessed souls who are seeking after Christ and cannot be satisfied without Him. I was reading one of J. C. Philpot’s letters only this week (and Philpot was very cutting and separating). But John Kay, the clergyman who had come out of the Church of England and had suffered for conscience sake, was preaching so severely in our chapels, cutting almost everybody off. Philpot wrote to his friend Joseph Parry and said, “There is one thing our friend Kay can never do. He can never blot that text out of Scripture, ‘Seek, and ye shall find,’ and what a mercy!” “To seeking souls He always gives more than their hearts expect.”

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus.” As we read this morning (Mark 16), you remember there was one thing that burdened the hearts of these godly women, and that was the great stone. “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? ... for it was very great.” Poor, feeble women could not roll the stone away. That great stone was there at the door of the sepulchre between the body of the Lord Jesus and themselves, and who shall roll it away? “And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.” You do not need me to tell you what had rolled away that great stone. *The power of His resurrection.* And beloved friends, the power of His resurrection is still the same this morning as when the Lord and Saviour rose triumphantly from the dead. And not just that; it can be known. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.”

Well, perhaps like those godly women some of you have a great stone. Who shall roll it away, for it is very great? You realise you cannot roll it away. Perhaps it is a stone that comes between your Saviour and yourself and it separates, and who shall roll it away? Or what about those of you with sin and guilt, that great stone lying heavy on your conscience? Who shall roll it away? And what about all those stones you have in providence, so many of you with your troubles in your families, your health, those you love, your circumstances and the unknown way? And who shall roll you away the stone? With many it is that great stone, and you see it at the door of the sepulchre. It is when you look forward to your

end. “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” There is a great stone there, and who shall roll it away? “And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.” The power of Christ’s resurrection had done it. And how many a believer has found, *when you come there*, not before, *when you come there*, the stone is rolled away, for it is very great! That hymn we sang recently, how good it was: “*When I come there*, I can’t be confounded, the Lord will appear.”

“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.” One thing: have you ever noticed that in holy Scripture there is never really a description of how the resurrection took place? There is the announcement made, the clear, blessed announcement, but it happened in secret, and there was a veil drawn over it. The old godly divines used to say they felt that was one great point of inspiration of Scripture. If it had just been a human story, a human fabrication, O what a wonderful account would have been given of the Lord Jesus rising from the dead and coming forth from the grave; but there is that veil drawn over it. The crucifixion was very public, and the ascension; but the resurrection, there is that veil over it. Just the simple announcement: “He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

One thing we are told, that an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone. You might say, “What need was there for an angel to come from heaven? The Lord Jesus rose triumphant by His own divine, almighty power. What need was there for an angel to come and roll away the stone?” Well, as I see it, when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cried, “It is finished,” then His shame and His ignominy were ended for ever. He must have an honourable burial, not the lot of those who were crucified. He must be “with the rich in His death.” It must be an honourable burial, and for His coming forth out of the grave, an angel must come from heaven to roll away the stone before Him. A wonderful truth, the resurrection. “The Lord is risen indeed.”

“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise;
Christ has opened paradise.”

“He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” We are told that when this angel descended from

heaven, “his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” We cannot help but think of the general resurrection of the dead in the last great day. O what a scene that will be, when all the graves give up their dead, when the righteous rise and when the wicked rise, and when like this, the garden tomb in Jerusalem, “for fear of him” – an angel – “the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” What about when,

“Lo! He comes, with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain,
Thousand, thousand saints attending”?

Have you noticed the contrast here, the marked contrast, the gracious contrast? “For fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye.” O you see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and so it will be in the great day when millions shake and become as dead men. But, “Fear not ye.” Who? Those who by precious faith have sought the Saviour and have found Him.

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Well then, this announcement. So simple this announcement that Christ who was crucified is dead no more, that He lives, that He is risen from the dead. “He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.” I do not know how you think about the resurrection, beloved friends, but as it hovers round my spirit I tend to think of the resurrection in three ways. First of all there is the *fact* of the resurrection, the glorious *fact*. “The Lord is risen indeed.” But then there is a second thing: the *power* of His resurrection, that power which was put forth when He rose from the dead, that power that can still be known today, that power which is put forth when a sinner is born again, that power the Lord’s people experience. And then hovering round it there is a third thing, and that is the *risen Saviour*. It is not just the fact, not just the power, but it is a *Person*, a glorious *Person*. “The Saviour lives no more to die.” And He says to all His people, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

So we think of this garden scene, the rock sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, and we think of this glorious fact of the resurrection, and we think of this divine almighty power, the power of the resurrection. But above all we think of the risen Saviour. The vital point for you and me is

this: a vital, personal, saving knowledge of Christ – not just to know *of* Him, not just to know *about* Him – but to know *Him*, whom to know is life eternal. Now how many of you from an honest heart can personally say that you do know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, this risen Saviour? He can be known; He can be loved; He can be worshipped.

“The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.” The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, that He who was crucified rose triumphant from the dead and rose to die no more. Now what is the importance of the resurrection? Have you noticed the Lord Jesus in His ministry laid so much emphasis on it? “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He laid so much emphasis on it, that He would die and that He would rise again. “I have power to lay it [My life] down, and I have power to take it again.” In one sense other people had risen from the dead. You think of the Shunammite’s son; you think of the widow woman’s son at Zarephath. Come to the New Testament, and you can go through a few: Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, the son of the widow of Nain. O but the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ laid so much emphasis on it, that He would die, but by His own almighty power He would rise again. The Lord Jesus spoke of it as an evidence that He was whom He claimed to be. He said He came forth from the Father. He said He was the Son of God eternally. He said He would die and rise from the dead. So He was “declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead.”

But more than that, it was not an ordinary death the Lord Jesus died. He died a sacrifice for sin. He died with all the sins of all His people laid upon Him. If one sin had remained, if one sin had not been atoned for, then the lifeless body must have remained in the grave. But, “The Lord is risen indeed,” the open seal that the Father had accepted His sacrifice, the open evidence that sin is for ever put away and God’s people “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” O how much there is that hangs on the resurrection! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.... And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

“He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.” “The Saviour lives no more to die.” But do not forget the angel did not leave this out: “Jesus, which was crucified.” The resurrection supposes that Jesus died, and He did. And what a death He died! “Jesus, which was crucified,” in love to sinners, to open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness in His precious blood, to open up a new and living way to heaven, to pay the ransom price, to save His people with an everlasting salvation. Paul says, “We preach Christ crucified.” Well, we do; no hope apart from a crucified Saviour. “We preach Christ crucified,” but not a dead Christ, a living Christ. We preach Christ who was crucified, who died, who was buried, who rose again. “But now *is* Christ risen from the dead.” “The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.” The glorious fact of His resurrection.

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” They were invited to view the empty tomb. They were invited to view the place where the Lord lay, to see a tomb for ever empty, to see a tomb for ever vacated. The Christian religion invites investigation. It is not afraid of it. You remember right at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry, those two who were following Him said, “Master, where dwellest Thou?” He said, “Come and see.” And the Christian religion always speaks like that. It says, “Come and see.” There is proof here. There is evidence here. “He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” – that tomb for ever empty; that tomb for ever vacated. Not long after this Simon Peter could stand up not far away from the rock tomb and he could declare without fear of contradiction that that tomb was empty, that the Lord had risen triumphant from the dead. “He is not here: for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

Now there are two very beautiful applications of this word, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” The first is *the ordinance of believers’ baptism*. The open baptistery represents the grave of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “View the rite with understanding; Jesus’ grave before you lies.” In the ordinance of believers’ baptism by immersion in water, going right underneath the water and coming right up from it, is symbolised the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The person being baptized simply confesses this openly before all: my only hope is in what the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ accomplished in His death, burial and resurrection; and also that desire to be buried with Him

by baptism unto death, to rise again to newness of life, to die to my past life, to live that new life by faith upon the Son of God. Now, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” It is a most beautiful ordinance, and it is an ordinance for sinners.

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” The second application: *the grave of a believer*. O how often have we looked down into the open grave of a believer and we have said, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay”! All the sin, all the bitterness taken out of it, that as surely as Jesus died and rose again, the blessed dead who have died in the Lord will one day rise again triumphant to eternal life. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” You notice it says, “The angel answered.” But we do not read that these godly women had spoken a single word or asked a single question. “The angel answered.” The Lord knew what was in their heart and the Lord knows what is in your heart and the Lord knows what is in my heart. It is a wonderful thing when you come to the sanctuary seeking answers. Well, I suppose they had many questions, especially when they saw the stone rolled away. They had many questions, and perhaps as you come to the house of God this morning you have many questions. Perhaps, Why did the Lord Jesus die and rise again? And perhaps, Did the Lord Jesus die and rise again *for me*? But you have all these questions. If it be so tell me, and if it be not so, tell me.

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” This then was the first word that was spoken after the Lord’s resurrection, and it began with this: “Fear not ye.” In other words, no cause for fear now the Redeemer is risen triumphant from the dead having conquered sin, Satan, death and hell. “Fear not ye” – the first word spoken after the resurrection and spoken not just to these godly women but spoken to the whole church of God right down to the end of time. “Fear not ye.” Because it can be said of believers in all ages, “I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” So this is the first word spoken after the resurrection. The first word spoken personally by the Lord Jesus Himself after the resurrection was this: “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” – the risen Saviour to Mary Magdalene. And here, no cause for fear if the Saviour be risen. There, no

cause for fear if the Saviour be risen. “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?”

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” Remember it was a similar word that the Lord Jesus spoke to John on the Isle of Patmos. John said, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me” – that right hand of gracious authority, that right hand of love. “He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” That means complete authority over hell and death, but it means this: if the Lord Jesus has the keys of hell, when He cried, “It is finished,” He for ever locked the doors of hell against all His people ever entering therein.

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” So what are your fears this morning? Fears because of your sin, fears because of your soul and the great day, the day of your death, fears because of temptation, fears because of the assaults of Satan. “Fear not ye” – the answer to it all is in the Saviour who once died, who now for ever lives and ever reigns, who is almighty to save, and who is so full of compassion. “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.” “Fear not ye.” What are your fears? Things in providence, the afflictions you are in, the peculiar circumstances through which you are passing, the unknown way.

“Fear not ye.” To see the risen Saviour exalted at God’s right hand. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand.” That means *all things*, all things in the hands of the risen Saviour: the whole of redemption, the whole of creation, the whole of providence, yes, and you personally if you are one of His people, you with all your concerns, all these things in the hands of the risen Saviour. We sing, “Sovereign Ruler of the skies.” Look at that well-known line: “All my times are in Thy hand.” But to see Christ as a once-crucified, but now risen and exalted Saviour, and to feel that all my concerns, all my times, all my providences, all my circumstances, all are in His divine, almighty, gracious, all-wise hands. One hymnwriter says, “My times are in Thy hands; my God, I wish them there.” O to see everything in the Saviour’s hands, and then to see Him, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

“The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”