
Sermon Notes

April 4, 2021

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

A CHANGE OF HEART From Fear to Great Joy Matthew 28:1-10

The High Point of Hope

- ❖ Well constructed stories have a beginning, a middle and an ending
 - dramatic tension builds as the narrative reaches its high point
 - often, this climactic moment involves a sudden reversal of fortune
- ❖ The climactic moment of salvation history occurs as Jesus reverses the curse of sin and moves from life to death
 - the cornerstone of the Christian faith
 - most important event in the history of the world
 - without the resurrection, there is no Christianity
- ❖ We rest our faith in Jesus' own words about His resurrection (John 11:25-6, 14:19)

A Response of Fear

- ❖ Fear causes the Roman guards to tremble
 - the earth shakes
 - the guards shake
- ❖ Although the guards experience a “gut-level”, emotional response, they do not respond with worship

Fear AND Great Joy

- ❖ The women also respond to the empty tomb with fear
 - their fear seems to be precipitated by the presence of an angel sitting on the stone
 - throughout Scripture, unexpected angelic appearances provoke fear
 - when those who are unholy come face to face with that which is holy, there is inevitably a response of fear
- ❖ The angelic announcement causes the fear of the women to be tempered with great joy
- ❖ **Fear + Great Joy** leads to:
 - worship (v. 9)
 - the women bow in worship at Jesus' feet
 - bow and confess (Phil 2:9-11)

- ***work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...*** (Phil 2:9-12)
 - the gift of God’s saving grace does not leave us unchanged or unmoved
 - those who truly embrace Jesus’ resurrection power do so with ***fear and trembling***
 - receiving God’s saving grace causes us to experience both fear (*i.e.* a spirit of deep awe, reverence, wonder) AND great joy
- witness and testimony (v. 10)
 - the women tell the disciples the good news: not only is Jesus alive again, Jesus still calls them his ***brothers***
 - hope is rekindled in the disciples because their relationship with Jesus is still intact

Fear and Great Joy in 2021

- ❖ **Fear - Great Joy** leads to
 - dread (Psalms 55:4-5, 119:120; Heb 12:18-21)
 - trembling with no hope of relief
- ❖ **Great Joy - Fear** leads to
 - shallowness (Matthew 13:20-21)
 - no root leads to collapse
 - the failure of faith... the death of faith
- ❖ **Fear + Great Joy** leads us to experience the fullness of what God offers us in Christ

Personal Application

1. What is your response to Jesus’ resurrection? Are you more like the soldiers or more like the women at the tomb?
2. As you think over the last few weeks of your life, how would you characterize the ways in which you have been relating to God? Hurried? Distracted? Irregular? Perfunctory? Deep? Meaningful? Worshipful? Devoted?
3. Which is more characteristic of you in terms of your relationship with God: coming to Him in fear (*i.e.* a spirit of deep awe, reverence, wonder) or finding great joy in Him? If one seems stronger than the other, what can you do in order to enhance and increase the response that seems less familiar to you?
4. As you consider the ways that “fear” and “great joy” work together to strengthen our worship, witness and hope in God, what are some ways that you would like to strengthen either one or both of these responses to who God is and what He has done for you?
5. Pray that God will nourish and sustain fear AND great joy within you and cause you to more experience the fullness of what God offers you because of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death.