

Matthew 27:57–28:15 | “His Death Was Not Defeat!”
Preached on August 11, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 27, verse 57. *[pause]*

We are almost through the gospel of Matthew, as we will be entering the last chapter this morning. *[pauseeee]*

Yogi Berra was a baseball great, who played in the major leagues back in the 1940’s, 50’s, and 60’s.

But something that’s remembered along with his baseball playing are some of the funny things that he said. *[pausee]*

He once said, “It’s déjà vu all over again!” *[pause]*

He also said the line, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” *[pause]*

And also, “Ninety percent of the game is half mental.” *[pause]*

But probably the one that is said the most by people is, “It ain’t over till it’s over.” *[pausee]*

Apparently, Yogi Berra said that when he was a baseball manager in the 1973 pennant race, and his team rallied to win the National League East.¹ *[pauseeee]*

We love to use that phrase: “It’s not over until it’s over.” *[pause]*

It signifies hope—that even though things look bleak, there’s still a prospect of victory...

Whether it be a sport’s game and we are cheering on our team, or an election, or some other competition...

... We use that phrase because we are hopeful that things will turn out well for the person or team that we want to win. *[pauseeee]*

It’s even used when we are buying or selling a house, for we all know that things could fall through at the last minute. *[pausee]*

Some people have used it about a business that doesn’t look too good, but it’s not truly over until it’s over. *[pause]*

Well as we look at our passage today, all seemed to be over, as Jesus died on the cross.

He was even buried and the tomb closed up, but as the phrase goes, “It’s not over until it’s over.” *[pauseeee]*

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/24/sports/yogi-berra-yogi-isms-quotes-explored.html>.

In the previous passage, Jesus died on the cross, and now we pick up in Matthew 27:57, as we see what happens next. *[READ 27:57–66]*

Here we see the account of Jesus’ burial, and something that we see clearly is that *Jesus actually died*. *[pause]*

It’s not like Jesus was pretending to be dead.

He wasn’t just unconscious for a short period of time before being revived later—no, He was dead-dead. *[pauseeee]*

There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that he had in fact died. *[pause]*

The Romans knew how to kill people, and the soldiers were tasked with making sure that those who were crucified had truly died. *[pause]*

The disciples knew He was dead, for they were overtaken with sorrow, and Joseph of Arimathea even cares for his dead body and buries it, for he knows that Jesus died. *[pause]*

Even Jesus’ enemies knew that He was dead, for their worry wasn’t about whether Jesus was dead or not, but rather, that His dead body would be stolen. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus’ death is a historical reality, and it needed to be, for He had to truly die in order to pay for our sins.

And like Isaiah 53 says, “They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.”² *[pauseeeee]*

It’s during this time period of Jesus’ body being in the tomb that made it seem like all hope was lost.

And that’s what I want to talk about first...

I. When hope seems lost. (27:57–66)

There is a certain demeanor and body language of those who are hopeless. *[pauseeee]*

Just watch how differently a young sports team plays when they are getting blown out—you can see their hopelessness in each of their movements. *[pause]*

Look at the faces of employees, whose employer is running a “going out of business sale”—it’s a sad sight. *[pauseee]*

Well when Jesus was in the tomb, Jesus’ disciples were like that: hopeless. *[pause]*

Their master had died, and all seemed lost.

² Isaiah 53:9a.

They had followed Him for years, marveled at His teaching and miracles, and were so hopeful of following Him into the future.

And now all of that seemed to be dead and gone when Jesus was gone. *[pauseeee]*

Everyone thought that it was all over. *[pause]*

In Joseph of Arimathea's care of Jesus' body, there's no hint that he thinks that anything will happen.

It's not like he keeps the tomb entrance open because he thought that Jesus would need to get out once he was raised in 3 days. *[pause]*

The male disciples are nowhere to be found.

And the female disciples near the tomb don't seem super expectant, but rather, more so sorrowful. *[pauseeee]*

Even the enemies of God thought that they had won. *[pause]*

They were probably inwardly rejoicing, if not outwardly, too, for they can't stand Jesus, but call Him an "imposter". *[pause]*

To them, Jesus was a fraudster, who deceived people, and were afraid that His disciples would steal the body to continue the deception.

But what's interesting is that they knew what He taught.

They mention that Jesus taught that He would rise again after 3 days, yet instead of believing it, they took measures to secure their quote-on-quote victory and to quell the Jesus movement. *[pauseeee]*

So when Jesus was buried, there was this great emotional chasm between the followers of Jesus and the enemies of Jesus. *[pause]*

The followers were sorrowful and hopeless, for it seemed to be over.

While the enemies were joyful and relishing in what they thought was a triumph. *[pauseeee]*

When I think about the opposite emotions here of the disciples and the enemies of Christ, I can't help but think of what you see at the end of a close basketball game. *[pause]*

The buzzer goes off to signal that the game is over and it's crazy how stark the two opposite emotions are. *[pause]*

One team is so joyous that they are jumping around, cheering, and all smiles.

The other team is walking slowly with their heads down, a frown on their face, and dejected.
[pauseeee]

That's a little like the time of Jesus in the tomb—the enemies of Jesus are rejoicing, the followers have their heads down. *[pauseeeee]*

But really, the disciples should have believed Jesus that He would rise 3 days later, like He said He would.

Yet they do not trust His Word, and so they end up moping in hopelessness. *[pauseeee]*

You see, when we do not remember and believe the truth, we become hopeless.

And when we do that, we are acting like the disciples did when Jesus was sealed up in the grave.
[pause]

Do you realize that? *[pause]*

So for us, when we become hopeless people, it is regularly due to ignoring the truth of Christ's resurrection, and acting like He has remained in the grave all the way up until today. *[pauseeeee]*

But Christ-followers should be the most hope-filled people in the world! *[pauseeee]*

We don't always act very hope-filled, do we? *[pause]*

We look around us and see evil men doing their worst, like what is seen here with the chief priests and Pharisees. *[pause]*

Sometimes to us, the world seems to have won, and we feel like all hope is lost.

And we think, "Look at how things are going! It's over." *[pauseeee]*

There's an election coming up in our country in a few months.

If the outcome is not what you wanted, how will you respond?

With despair? *[pauseeeee]*

Have you ever thought, "This is *only* going to end badly"? *[pause]*

We probably wouldn't ever want to admit it, but we despair way too much. *[pauseeeee]*

The truth is that when we are hopeless, we are counting God out.

We are not trusting His Word.

And that's why the angel in the next chapter highlights that Jesus "has risen, *as he said.*"
[pauseeeee]

Instead of being hope-filled based on the promise and power of God, they were hopeless, only thinking in terms of human possibility.

And I find that we do that way too often. [pause]

We count God out, and do not trust His promises and power.

We say, “That guy will never turn to Jesus!” [pause]

Really? Are you going to act like God can’t do a miracle and save that person? *[pause]*

We say, “What good will come out of this?”

But do we not serve a God who works all things together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose?³

Did we suddenly forget that “with God all things are possible”?⁴ [pauseeee]

Our default is hopeless, when our default should be hope-filled because we serve a God, who can do anything, even raise the dead! *[pauseeee]*

We are often devoid of hope.

We are like the disciples when Jesus was in the tomb, and when the enemies of Christ were rejoicing...

We act like all hope is lost, but like they say—“it’s not over until it’s over.” [pauseeee]

The story wasn’t over. The last page hadn’t been turned.

The tomb may have been sealed, but that seal would soon be broken by divine power. [pauseeee]

Friday arrived and there was sadness.

Saturday came and went, and there was despair.

But Sunday was coming, and with it...hope. *[pauseeeee]*

“A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon, and he asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. [pause]

The boy responded, ‘Eighteen to nothing—we’re behind.’ *[pause]*

‘Boy,’ said the spectator, ‘I’ll bet you’re discouraged.’ [pause]

³ A reference to Romans 8:28.

⁴ Matthew 19:26.

‘Why should I be discouraged?’ replied the little boy. ‘We haven’t even gotten up to bat yet!’⁵
[pauseeee]

Though it looked like all hope was lost, and defeat was sure, God just hadn’t gotten up to bat yet.
[pause]

He was waiting 3 days like Christ said would happen, for although all hope seemed lost...

Though it looked like Christ’s life had ended for good, and that His words would fail...

Hope would arise, and God’s power would shine forth. *[pauseee]*

So although sometimes hope seems lost...

II. Rejoice that hope has arisen with Christ! (28:1–15)

Let’s pick up READING, starting back up in Matthew 28, verse 1. *[READ 28:1–15]*

Why can we rejoice in hope?

For Jesus who truly died, also truly rose again. *[pauseeee]*

How do we know this?

The *supernatural events* attest to His resurrection. *[pause]*

Usually a place of graves or tombs is quiet, and there’s not too much going on, for it’s a place of the dead.

But this was no ordinary day among the tombstones. *[pause]*

An earthquake happens, which is like the earthquake at Jesus’ death, and this showed that God was at work doing something significant.

But that’s not all, for an angel appears, moves the stone away, and just plops himself on it.
[pause]

Usually in the Bible, if an angel appears in a story, it means something significant is going down.
[pause]

Remember the angel appearing to announce His birth?⁶

Now an angel appears to announce His resurrection. *[pauseeee]*

Also, the *witnesses of the resurrection* attest to Jesus being raised. *[pause]*

⁵ <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/h/hope.htm>.

⁶ See Matthew 1:20–23.

The women at the tomb witnessed that Jesus had been raised, for they saw that He wasn't in the tomb anymore, and also saw the risen Christ. *[pause]*

The soldiers are witnesses to Christ's resurrection, for they fainted in fear because of the angel, and then saw the tomb empty. *[pause]*

And the religious leaders are witnesses, for they hear about what happened, and decide to just keep it quiet. *[pauseeee]*

Both the followers of Jesus, as well as the enemies of Jesus, knew that the tomb was no longer occupied...

Jesus actually died, and then He actually rose from the dead.

Let's not become so accustomed to that idea that we forget how monumental and miraculous it really is! *[pauseeee]*

It's not like people are raised from the dead a couple days later on a regular basis.

Instead, we are used to people dying and then staying dead, but Jesus came back to life 3 days after He died! *[pauseeee]*

Can you imagine the overwhelming sight of seeing Jesus say "Greetings!" to you after you just saw Him die and get buried 3 days before?

It's like, "Wait, you were dead. I saw it. I saw you buried, and now you are here alive, walking around and talking to us?!" *[pauseeee]*

We serve a risen Savior.

And the triumph of Jesus in the resurrection demonstrated that His claims were verified. *[pauseee]*

All that He said about Himself was shown to be true...

He is for sure the Christ, the Son of God, Lord of all, and the grave couldn't hold Him. *[pause]*

That tomb to Jesus was like a man breaking easily through a spiderweb.

Just like a spider web can't hold a man back, so the grave couldn't hold Jesus down! *[pauseeeee]*

The triumph of Jesus through the resurrection also shows His victory over His enemies. *[pause]*

The enemies of Christ put Him to death, and they were relishing in their victory.

They even tried to seal their victory by sealing the tomb and placing guards at it, but they were defeated easily! *[pause]*

Their “victory” was no victory at all, but a counterfeit victory that turned to a complete crushing.

And after Jesus was raised from the dead, they were confronted with the truth—all of their evil conniving was in vain. *[pauseee]*

The religious leaders were so defeated by the resurrection that all they could do was to attempt to come up with a lie to try to avoid it. *[pauseee]*

This is because God’s enemies can only twist and cover up the truth, but they can never overcome it.

And what’s ironic is that the very ones who claimed that Jesus was an imposter, who deceived others, were now spreading lies in order to deceive others about Jesus’ resurrection. *[pauseeee]*

Did they really think that death could keep the source and fountain of life in the grave? *[pause]*

Christ’s resurrection is proof that God never loses! *[pause]*

Though evil seems to win, God never loses.

God’s purposes cannot be stopped!

And that leads me to another triumph, which is that Christ’s resurrection brought victory for us. *[pauseee]*

His resurrection gives us resurrection hope. *[pause]*

It reminds us that wicked people will not win in the end.

It reminds us that sin has been defeated at the Cross, for Jesus’ resurrection verifies that His sacrifice for our sins was accepted by God.

And it reminds us that death will not win, for through Christ’s resurrection, He conquered death. *[pauseee]*

The news of Christ’s resurrection turns our sorrow into joy, our hopelessness into hope.

Why?

For as 1 Corinthians 6:14 says, “God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.” *[pause]*

Later on Paul says that “Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”⁷ *[pause]*

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:20.

His resurrection assures all those who have trusted in Him of their own bodily resurrection someday. *[pauseeeee]*

So what does that mean for those who have believed in Him and have been saved?

It means that death is not the end for us.

Though we die, yet shall we live.⁸ *[pause]*

Death doesn't write the last words of your conclusion, but it is merely a chapter change in a never-ending book.

So trust Him, rely upon the resurrected One. *[pauseeee]*

For many, death is one of the greatest fears that they have, but why fear when we have a Lord who defeated death? *[pause]*

In Revelation, Jesus says, "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."⁹

So Jesus has authority to open and shut death and Hades at will! *[pause]*

How does He have this power?

Because He is the eternal One, but also, because He conquered death. *[pauseeee]*

To many people, death is unavoidable, serious, scary, and reigns over everyone—no one is exempt.

But what they don't realize is that Death does not reign over all—it is subjugated to Jesus Christ...

Death doesn't rule, Christ does.

So don't stand in awe and fear of Death, stand in awe and fear of the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Death is under lock and key, and there's only one keeper of the keys.

So don't fear because the perfect Lord Jesus has the authority and power over death. *[pause]*

For the Christian, death isn't a thief who steals our life away, NO, it is a thief that was humiliated and defeated by someone who caught it and slew it. *[pauseeee]*

As we bask in the glorious resurrection of Jesus, we can't help but see that...

Christ's resurrection is evidence of God's sovereign victory in Christ!

⁸ A reference to John 11:25.

⁹ Revelation 1:18.

As Christians, things can feel so hopeless at times. *[pause]*

We can feel like the disciples for those 3 days when Jesus was in the grave: hopeless, and thinking that evil has triumphed. *[pause]*

We look around us and see evil making headway. *[pause]*

We sometimes wonder what God is doing, and if Jesus will come through like He said. *[pause]*

Fear of the future overtakes us, and we can tend to “grieve as others do who have no hope.”¹⁰
[pause]

But in those moments, it’s not time to give up, throw up our hands, or cower in the corner.

Rather, we look with faith to the truth that Jesus rose from the tomb, and when we do that, hope arises. *[pause]*

For His resurrection proved that He is truly who He said He was—the great Messiah, Savior, and Lord. *[pause]*

His resurrection turned the tables on His enemies, sin was shown to be dealt with, and Satan, too. *[pause]*

And in His resurrection, He humiliated and triumphed over death, and has promised that He will bring us victory by raising up our bodies from the grave someday, too. *[pauseeee]*

So we do not grieve as those who have no hope when we face our own deaths, or even when our Christian loved ones die. *[pauseeee]*

Yes, we do grieve. *[pause]*

There is sadness, oh there is sadness, and that is appropriate.

But as we grieve, it is not a *hopeless grief*, as if our Christian loved one’s death is truly final.

For the Bible promises that their bodies will be raised again someday! *[pauseeeee]*

You know, sometimes people will call a believer’s burial place, “their final resting place”.

But that’s not true, do not say that. *[pause]*

The grave is not a believer’s final resting place for their body, but it’s merely a temporary one!
[pause]

Like Christ’s tomb was only a temporary place for His body, so our tombs are only temporary. *[pauseeee]*

¹⁰ 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

When you lay my body in the grave someday, do not grieve as others who have no hope.

Do not think of my gravesite as my final resting place, for it's not.

No, God will raise my body out of that wretched place to be a glorious, resurrected body someday to be with God forever. *[pauseeee]*

I came upon this article that was all about choosing the *perfect* final resting place, and how important it is.¹¹

But let me tell you: my grave doesn't have to be perfect because it's not where I'm going to be forever.

No, what's most important is not the site of your grave, what's most important is whether you know the risen Christ! *[pauseeee]*

Do you know Him? *[pause]*

Have you trusted in Him who died for our sins, was buried, and who rose again?¹² *[pause]*

In Him is life, for He is "the resurrection and the life", so that "whoever believes in [Him], though he die, yet shall he live."¹³ *[pause]*

Trust in Him, and know that you have eternal life, and resurrection hope amidst a world of sin, death, and decay. *[pauseeee]*

As we saw in the story this morning, Jesus' burial wasn't the final chapter of His life, and it definitely was not His final resting place.

Rather, when all looked hopeless, hope arose in Jesus. *[pause]*

So now as we go through this life, and we face those moments where all hope *seems* lost, we can remember the resurrection of Jesus, and let hope arise.

¹¹ <https://www.gentreo.com/choosing-the-perfect-final-resting-place-a-comprehensive-guide>.

¹² An allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

¹³ John 11:25.