



## Easter Sunday: Setting Out Again | Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

Have you ever reached the end of a story—whether it’s a book, a movie, or even a chapter in your own life—and thought, ‘Well, that’s it.’ Only to realize later... it wasn’t?

I love those kinds of stories. The ones where the credits start to roll, the music swells, and it really *feels* like the end—but then, just before the screen fades to black, something unexpected happens.

A twist. A clue. A glimmer of hope. Then you realize: this isn’t the end. It’s just the setup for what’s coming next and a new setting out again.

The best authors do that on purpose. They leave us wondering, waiting, and hoping—because they know something we don’t: that the story isn’t over. There is another book. Another season. Another chapter.

And I wonder...what if God writes our stories the same way?

The 1981 movie *Excalibur* is about King Arthur and the legendary sword of power.

When Arthur pulls Excalibur from the stone, he proves he is the rightful king, builds Camelot, and gathers noble knights to his Round Table. But then human flaws creep in... Gwenevere’s affair with Lancelot fractures the unity of the knights. And Arthur’s illegitimate son Mordred rises to challenge him.

In the final battle, Arthur, already grievously wounded, pulls himself forward, inch by inch, along the spear Mordred has just thrust through him. Arthur does this to drive Excalibur fatally into his evil son.

Showing Arthur’s sacrifice and determination to do what must be done to save his kingdom. And then the body of Arthur is whisked away to the mystical Isle of Avalon. Credits roll.

But it was not the end.

Legends whisper Arthur never truly died. In Avalon, time is but a dream. Arthur sleeps, waiting for a kingdom in need. Promising to return not as a mere man, but as the Once and Future King, to lead his people once more.

His end was not the end — it was only the turning of a page with a promised setting out again when the need is great.

In *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, tensions rise between two iconic heroes as Batman views Superman as a potential threat to humanity.

Thankfully, their fierce battle ends as they unite to face a greater threat: Doomsday, a monstrous creature bent on chaos.

In the climactic ending, Superman, knowing the risks, sacrifices himself by impaling Doomsday with a kryptonite spear, fatally wounding the beast but also himself.

The world mourns Superman's death, holding a funeral in Smallville.

However, in the film's final moments, the camera lingers on Clark Kent's coffin, where we begin to see small particles of dirt begin to levitate from its surface.

Subtly teasing at his resurrection for his next movie. Scene gave me goosebumps. A powerful three second sermon for the day of our resurrection.

In stories like *Excalibur* and *Batman v Superman* and countless others, we witness heroes who face what seems like the final ending – death, defeat, the collapse of everything they've built. But those endings are not truly the end.

Both stories remind us that what feels like a conclusion is often a quiet beginning and a heading off in new directions.

In our own lives, we have experienced moments that feel final. The loss of a dream job, the end of a dating relationship or close friendship, the passing of a loved one, a personal failure so deep it feels like we cannot recover.

We know what it feels like to bury parts of ourselves, covering them with cool dark earth, believing them lost forever.

But what we think is the end – the lowering of a coffin, the sealing of a fate – is often just a pause in the journey. It is just a moment to gather strength for the next chapter. Where again we find the end is not the end but a setting out again.

The best storytellers know we have that spark in us. That spark in Arthur and Superman, that desire to believe the end is not the end. The spark to rise again. To pause a moment to gather our strength after being knocked down, yes.

But also, we stand up, dust ourselves off, and set off again. Not exactly as we were but maybe a bit wiser and a bit more ready than ever to act in unity and hope.

How do we make meaning in our lives when these kinds of difficulties arise? How do we understand and process it when our best expectations are thwarted or an ending looms large?

Well, let's remember how we got here, to this Easter Sunday.

According to the gospel of Matthew, the death of Jesus unfolds as the climax of His earthly mission. After celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, overwhelmed with sorrow.

There, Judas betrays Him with a kiss. Jesus is arrested, taken before the high priest Caiaphas, and condemned in a mockery of a trial.

The next morning, Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. The crowd demands His crucifixion and Pilate gives in to the crowd's will. Jesus is scourged and led outside the city to be executed.

As Jesus is crucified, darkness covers the land from noon until three in the afternoon. When Jesus cries out with a loud voice and gives up His spirit.

A Roman centurion, witnessing these events, declares, "**Truly this was the Son of God!**" Jesus is then buried in a tomb and a large stone is rolled in front of the entrance.

The thick silence of death weighs heavily on their hearts. Jesus is no more.

The women who followed Jesus believed, really believed this was the end. The women go to the tomb to honor Jesus' body. In one account, they brought a mixture of aloes and myrrh weighing about 65 to 75 pounds to prepare his body. Their final act of love.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, carried in her heart a foreboding and promised dark day. She watched Jesus die and believed it was the end. She had been warned. Do you remember?

Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to be dedicated at the Temple. Where they were met by Simeon a devout man led by the Holy Spirit. Taking Jesus in his arms Simeon declares Jesus as salvation for all people, but he will face great opposition.

Simeon then turns to Mary and warns her a sword will pierce her soul too. Simeon's warning has finally come to pass. Such a crushing end to her son of promise.

The disciples, his friends, believed this was the end. At Jesus' arrest they all deserted him and fled in terror for their own lives. The next day they are devastated by the news of his death. They had hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

All of Jesus' enemies...Pontius Pilate, Herod, the chief priest, religious leaders, and the Roman soldiers who crucified people until they are really dead, believed this was the end. They knew Jesus was dead.

So, they didn't really know who took Jesus' body. Thankfully, now this Jesus thing will all blow over.

All of them really truly believed this was the end.

But what about you? What do you believe happened to Jesus?

In verse 5 an angel of the Lord, glowing, his appearance "like lightening" wearing cloths as white as snow, rolls the stone away and sat on it. I love that!

And then the angel tells the women, **"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."**

Jesus has risen from the dead?

And the women, afraid and yet filled with joy, probably bumping into each other as they scurry from that cramped but empty tomb, suddenly bump into Jesus!

And our risen Lord, seeing their shock and fear and wonder on their faces says, **"Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."**

The women hug his legs to prove to themselves he wasn't a ghost.

Jesus had risen from the dead!

Is that what you believe?

What are we doing here this morning? Why have we gathered? Why do we worship and what are we celebrating? Why are our faces radiant with awe and joy?

We are here because we believe the end is not the end. We believe Jesus physically rose from the dead. Where once our deaths felt like the final arrival, Jesus has changed all of that.

Now, through our Risen Lord, there is new life for us here and now and eternal life beyond the here and now.

And did you notice that Jesus barely paused at his own resurrection? He didn't do a little dance or gloat or show off his resurrected body.

I would have. I would have run through walls and scared the living daylights out of my friends! But you do you.

Jesus barely paused before he began setting the women out again to give a message to his disciples. Barely a pause before directing his disciples, setting them out

again to find him in Galilee. We might be tempted to treat Easter as the finish line! We have arrived and I have survived!

But even this, even Jesus' resurrection is not an ending either, just a new beginning. We are all given a new purpose when we hear Jesus say, "**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...**"

What is our next chapter in following Jesus and making new disciples? The women were "afraid, yet filled with joy" and the disciples had a mixture of joy and doubts.

How can we acknowledge our own fear and even our doubts? How can we lean into the next chapter God is calling us to and embrace it with joy?

Those are good questions. But we don't need to find answers for them today.

I think it is enough to acknowledge the determination of our Lord...who is neither myth nor comic book hero.

It is enough to remember Jesus' resolve and commitment to fulfill his Father's will, to affirm his sacrifice on the cross. And to recount how Jesus did all he could to ensure the survival of his Kingdom, to save everyone, everywhere, ever...all who are willing.

The tomb is empty.

Jesus has risen just like he said.

On this Easter day, as we go forth, let it be enough to celebrate that our Lord is risen. That what looked like the end was not the end at all—Jesus rose, so that we too might rise and go forward with Him into newness of life. Amen.

In our **Time of Transition**... If Jesus truly rose from the dead, what might that mean for the chapter you're in right now?

Or what situation in your life needs the hope of the resurrection—the reminder that our Risen Lord is still moving, still active, and still redeeming?"