

0 (0s):

Well, If, you are someone who likes Jesus, but are not quite too sure about those Christians and those crazy religious people. This series starting Next week is for you because there is a lot of junk that comes with religion and Jesus actually came to confront that. So we're going to too. So come back Next week for that series in April, but today is Easter. It's Easter. In fact, I've got a special message that man, when God put this on my heart, a few months ago, I was fired up and I'm just as fired up today for that message. So I hope that you guys are excited. You, guys ready? Well, good. Okay, let's do it. And I think it's important because some of you might be feeling like this is just a waste of time. You're like, I'm ready for brunch. We're the mimosas.

0 (41s):

And I, I'm telling you, some people feel that way. Maybe somebody dragged you here and you're like, ah, do I really have to come today? That this whole thing is a waste of time. And people feel that way because the, the narrative out there is that Christianity is dying. John Lennon of the Beatles once said in an interview years ago, he said, Christianity will go, it will vanish and shrink. I need ant argue about that. I'm right and will be proved right. That's what he said right before he said that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. And it's not just in pop culture or in Hollywood. It's even among religious people.

0 (1m 21s):

That's what they say. I, I read this article in the Huffington Post and this person said this. He said, I travel all over this country coaching religious leaders and consulting with congregations of every stripe imaginable. And there is one overarching conclusion to which I've come, Christianity is dying. And he's not the only one to write articles like that. I'm sure you've heard it. Maybe even you've thought it. I think we've all felt it as we've driven by where a church used to be and now there's just a high rise apartment or an old church converted into a dental office or a nightclub. Don't tell me, don't raise your hand if you've been to the the club here in Denver.

0 (2m 3s):

We don't need to see those hands, but that's what we think that Christianity is dying. That this is just a big waste of time, And, we should all go home. So many people think that, and that's why I've titled my message today, why Christianity won't die. It's not dying right now, and it won't ever die because of what happened 2000 years ago that we celebrate on Easter every year. It won't die. It should have died because Jesus died. But it didn't. Something happened. And that's what we're gonna be talking about today. Now, when I use the word Christianity, I know that can mean a lot of different things in our mind. And I mean two things by it.

0 (2m 43s):

One, the message. It's the same message that was proclaimed at the beginning, and I'm gonna proclaim it again today. It's the message that we proclaim as followers to Jesus. That's the first thing. The second thing is the movement. And it's the movement that was spawned out of that message. So when I refer to Christianity, I'm talking about the message and the movement. We got that. 'cause yes, there are churches

that die or struggle, we know that. But the, the message and the movement won't ever die. And that's what we're gonna learn today. We're gonna learn three reasons from the very beginning. Why, Christianity won't die. You guys ready for this? Yeah. Can you just say out loud, I'm ready. I'm ready. Okay. That's better. You guys are better than all the other services. Like I like this 10 40 service.

0 (3m 24s):

You have to sleep longer. Maybe that's what it's, we're gonna learn three reasons today. If, you have your Bible, go open it with me to Matthew chapter 28, If. you have a smartphone, you can use that too. Download the U version Bible app. And on the bottom right hand corner there's a button that says more. And then in the center it's events. You can search for the Rise Church Denver event. See the scripture and the notes that we're gonna be looking at today, we're gonna learn three reasons from this chapter, why Christianity didn't die and why it won't die today. And the first one is this, something transformed the women. Something transformed the women. So we're gonna start in chapter 28, verse one. but I know that you guys didn't read 27 before you got here. That's all right.

0 (4m 4s):

I'll catch you up. Jesus died. Okay. And that's chapter 27. Jesus was arrested though he had done nothing wrong, committed no crimes. He was still executed on a cross for crimes that he did not commit. And the Romans were experts at killing people. So they put him on the, on the cross, killed him to make sure that he was dead. They stabbed him in the side with a spear. He was dead. So they took down his body. A rich man named Joseph of Arimathea said, Hey, can I have the body? He had a tomb of his own. And so he took it and put Jesus' body in his own tomb. The body was in the tomb. And. we would've known people back then, would've known where this tomb was. And the Romans to be extra careful, put a whole troop of soldiers to guard that tomb.

0 (4m 45s):

Remember, they're the best soldiers in the ancient world. And there they are guarding the tomb on Friday. And then on Saturday they're guarding the tomb where Jesus' body is in the tomb. And then we pick up the third day Sunday in chapter 28. Verse one says this, after the Sabbath, after Saturday at Dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, don't you like that name? The other Mary went to look at the tomb, Mary and the other Mary. There are four accounts of Jesus' life. Matthew, mark, Luke, and John and If. you look at the other accounts, there are probably other women there with them.

0 (5m 25s):

There are at least these two women, perhaps as many as five women that are going there to the tomb. Do you know why they're going to the tomb? They're mourning, they're grieving, they're sad because the Savior who they had followed, learned from, he was their rabbi, their teacher, they're his students. They've learned from him and now he's dead. They're also going to, to put oil and embalm the body to make sure Jesus' dead body is prepared for burial. So there they go. And, and I just wanna give you guys a bonus point, is that

okay? Did you notice how there's students of Jesus, disciples of Jesus that are women? This is a big deal, okay? Jesus was probably the only rabbi in the ancient world to have female disciples.

0 (6m 7s):

Female students. Did you know that Harvard law didn't allow female students until 1950? Okay? Jesus was pro-women before it was cool. So here are these women go into the tomb and something is going to transform them out of their sadness. In mourning verse two, it says, there 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. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. They were petrified.

0 (6m 47s):

Verse five, the angel said to the women, do not be afraid. For I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He's not here. He has risen. Just as he said, come and see the place where he lay. And there the tomb was empty. Nobody. Verse seven, then 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 so the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid, yet filled with what joy and ran to tell his disciples.

0 (7m 32s):

They went to the tomb, sad, mourning, grieving, ready for, for probably seven days to mourn Jesus, their rabbi. And they relieved the tomb. Not sad. They have been transformed. Now they went from sad to celebrating, from mourning to excited, happy, filled with joy. Something transformed. Their demeanor. And even their very emotions changed. Something happened, but it wasn't just their emotions that were transformed. Keep reading with me in verse nine. Suddenly Jesus met them. This is the Jesus who is dead, right? Jesus met them. Greetings.

0 (8m 12s):

He said. They came to him clasped his feet, meaning they touched his resurrected body and they worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee where they will see me. Do you notice how these women worshiped Jesus? don't know. If you guys realize they, they worshiped him. Okay, don't think you get how crazy this is. Here are a group of Jewish women who all their lives have worshiped one God, and here they are worshipping Jesus. This is radical. This is radical.

0 (8m 52s):

You know, elsewhere in, in the Bible, there are times where someone does something magnificent or performs a miracle and people fall down to worship. I think it's just kind of a natural occurrence for people. They just fall down to worship when, when something amazing happens. But every time in the Bible, when that happens, the person's like, get up. Don't worship me. There's only one God to worship. Because the very first commandment that God ever gave, do you know what it was? You shall have no other gods before

me. That's first in the 10 commandments. Jews to this day recite something called the Shema here, Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. There is one God to worship. Don't worship any other gods. Don't worship any human beings, any plants, any statues, nothing else can be worshiped except the one true God.

0 (9m 37s):

And here are these women who knew that, and now they're worshipping Jesus. This is radical. This is crazy. Something has transformed everything they believe. And it wasn't just them. It was the entirety of the early church. They started singing to Jesus, praying to Jesus, worshipping Jesus. They even started worshipping there at the very beginning on Sunday, even though all their lives they had worshiped on Saturday, something radically has must have changed and completely shifted what they believed. Something transformed the women. And and, and it's not that they think Jesus is a second God. They wanted to believe that. They would've believed that Jesus was the one true God come in the flesh.

0 (10m 19s):

So they were gonna worship him. See everything these women believed, not just their emotions, but they go from worrying now to worship, right? Jesus himself, radical transformation. But it's not just the women. If, you guessed it. Point number two is something transformed the men. Women are transformed. Something transformed the men as well. Now, the last time we saw the men, do you know what they were doing? They were afraid. When Jesus was arrested, all of Jesus's 11 male disciples, they ran away. Judas had betrayed him. He's the 12th one. But the 11 disciples, they, they ran away. They were afraid. Peter denied Jesus three times.

0 (10m 60s):

Like, I don't even know who that guy is, because they were afraid they were cowering in fear. They were cowards. That's where we saw them last. But then something transforms them. Look at verse 16 with me. It says, then the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him. See, it's the men too. But some doubted. I love how honest the Bible is like this is the first time ever seeing someone raised from the dead. They're gonna have some questions, right? So if you're here And, you got some doubts and questions, you're in good company, okay? Then it says, then Jesus in verse 18 came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

0 (11m 40s):

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus said, you've been my disciple. You've been my follower. Now go help other people. Follow me. And guess what? The men did that they went out and told people about Jesus and what had happened and how they had been transformed and that God could transform them because of what Jesus did. That's something that happened. Now, this is crazy too. If someone dies And, we really like them. They would've maybe venerated the tomb. This is what people do. They go to the tomb of someone who's special to celebrate that person who died. Sometimes they put up a nice little statue.

0 (12m 22s):

Jesus' disciples didn't do either of those things. They went and did what he said, telling everybody that Jesus hadn't stayed in the tomb. Okay? I want to take a quick poll because normally what happens when someone dies is they're forgotten about. Let me ask you, If, you know any of these names? By show of hands, who in here knows who Simon of Pere is one in the front. You're a nerd like me, like you Martin. Okay? How about a throng? The shepherd? Anybody heard of him? Hmm, nobody on that one. How about Judas, the Galilean, not Judas, the scary.

0 (13m 2s):

Judas, the Galilean. There might be a couple more hands on this one for us nerds, we know these names. These were actually three of the 12 different people who the historian Josephus writes about that called themselves the Messiah around Jesus' Day. Did you know that there were other people that said, I'm the Messiah that's come to save the world that you've been waiting for. But then what happened? They died. The movement fizzles out And, we don't remember who they are. It's what happened again and again and again. And it should have happened if Jesus actually stayed dead. But something happened and these 11 disciples decide to do what Jesus said and go risk their own lives for what they believe to be true.

0 (13m 48s):

Now, don't know If. you guys know this and a couple of these are recorded in the scriptures, most we find from his history and tradition. but I want to tell you what happened to the 12 disciples. So these 12 disciples, we know that Judas of course, took his own life because he had betrayed Jesus. But then Peter became the leader of that early church and he went and told all sorts of people about Jesus, including into Rome, where they arrested him and they said, we're gonna crucify you. But he said, I don't wanna be crucified the same way that my savior was. So they crucified him upside down. Then there was James, who was actually the first of the disciples to be killed in the Book of Acts we're told in 80 44 that Herod put him to death by the sword for preaching the good news of Jesus.

0 (14m 33s):

Then there's the other James, that's another great name, right? The other James. He was thrown out of the temple for telling people about Jesus, where they threw stones at him until he died. Then there's Nathaniel tradition says that he went into modern day Armenia to tell people about Jesus where he was beheaded. Philip went to Turkey where they once again threw stones at him until he died. Andrew proclaimed Jesus in Greece where he was crucified and on a cross in the shape of an ex. It's called St. Andrew's cross. To this day, Matthew who wrote the account we've been reading was stabbed to death in Ethiopia to by claiming the name of Jesus Thomas, who was doubting Thomas 'cause he's the one who didn't believe it.

0 (15m 18s):

First, he went as far as India to tell people about Jesus, where he was stabbed and killed at the point of a

spear. Thaddeus was hacked to death in Iran. Simon, the zealot was killed in Samaria, and John was probably the only one of the 12 disciples to live into old age. But first, he was boiled alive and then sent into exile on the island of Patmos to live by himself for the rest of his days. All 12 of those people were willing to give their entire lives, even die for something they believed in. Now, you don't die for a lie. You die for something you believe in. The Romans had already started to tell people, oh, the disciples just stole the body.

0 (15m 59s):

But if they had stolen the Bible, they're not gonna risk their lives to go all over the world and tell people what had happened. They would've given up and gone home, but up a statue. And it wasn't just these 11 disciples. Jesus appeared to some 500 people over a span of 40 days where they touched him, hugged him, ate meals with him, celebrated with him, loved him, and and, and then after 40 days, Jesus ascended into heaven. And those 500 people never recounted what they had seen because something had happened. It wasn't that the body was stolen, it wasn't that they were all going crazy together. They all knew that something happened and it was something that could only be explained by one thing.

0 (16m 43s):

That's the second reason. Why Christianity won't die. You're ready for the third one? Something transformed the world. These 12 disciples, these 11 disciples, I'm sorry, these 11 disciples actually did go make disciples, which what Jesus told them to do in verse 19, he says, therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. What was formerly just a Jewish religion. Now, Jesus is saying, go help everyone no matter their background, their beliefs, their ethnicity. Tell 'em all about me, So that they might believe and follow me. And that's what they did. The disciples spread the good news all over the ancient world, and it transformed our world as we know it. Our calendar is transformed by Jesus. Did you know that BC before Christ and the year of our Lord, even if, you use the modern common era.

0 (17m 30s):

It still starts with Jesus. Our our calendar was changed, our world was changed as well. Historian Tom Holland wrote a great, great book called Dominion, which tracks what Christianity did from the beginning and how our entire western world is shaped because of Christianity. The reason why we have public schools and hospitals is because of Christianity. Even an atheist historian like Yuval Noah Harari has said that we could not even fathom or have an idea for human rights if it weren't for Christianity. It doesn't make sense apart from a belief that God created us and loves us each individually, our world is completely transformed because of what happened. That's something and and it really did transform the world.

0 (18m 13s):

It started with just a few hundred disciples at the beginning and then a few thousand, 3000 and 5,000. And within a few hundred years, there were millions of people who put their faith in Jesus, so much So that the Roman emperor converted to Christianity and they declared the Roman Empire, which had previously killed

Jesus was now a Christian empire, and it kept spreading throughout Europe and Africa and Asia into North America today. And Christianity is still growing to this day. Did you know that? I don't tell you that in the news, If, you were to look at a map of the world and divide up all the Christians in the world and represent them by eight different people.

0 (18m 54s):

Only one of those individuals would live in the United States or Canada, where the minority, two of them would live in Latin America and the Caribbean two would live in Sub-Saharan Africa. One would live in Asia, and two would represent all the other Christians around the world. See, Christianity is a truly global force. It's a movement that can't be stopped. In fact, more and more people are coming to faith in Jesus every single day in places like Brazil and even in Iran where it is illegal. Christianity is expanding and exploding in China where it is illegal to worship like we do here every week. There were more Christians who worshiped last Sunday than in all of Christian Europe.

0 (19m 40s):

Christianity continues to grow. That's why today there are over 2.4 billion people who claim the name of Christ. Christianity isn't dying. And the reason why we know that is because the world was transformed. We can look at all the explanations of why this happened. What is that something that happened? Someone stole a body. Nah, the body would've turned up. Those people would've recanted what they said. Those disciples wouldn't have given their lives for this. They're just crazy. No, I don't think so. Something happened, and I think only one thing makes sense of all the evidence that Christianity won't die because Jesus rose from the dead.

0 (20m 26s):

Jesus rose from the dead, they went to the tomb and it was empty. There was nobody body in the tomb because Jesus had risen from the dead and 500 people saw it, touched him, hung out with him, hugged him, ate meals with him, and they knew what they saw was true and they went to tell everyone else about it. See, Christianity won't die ever because Jesus rose from the dead. And there's a fourth point, okay? This isn't in your outline. You ready for this? This is the fourth reason why we know Christianity won't die. Because he transformed me. He transformed me. And I'm gonna tell you I'm a mess, okay?

0 (21m 8s):

It's not just I was a mess. I am a mess, okay? And so is the person next to you. I know this. I'm a pastor. I hear some of their confessions, okay? I want you to turn to the person next to you and say, you're a mess, a mess. You are. You're watching online. You're a mess too. We're all a mess. We all do do dumb things, stupid things, things we know better. And, we still do it. We know we should eat better. We don't And. we know certain things that we shouldn't hurt other people or ourselves, And. we do it anyways. When we do those things against God, the Bible calls that sin and every single one of us has sinned. We've done wrong. And I know that I am and was a mess.

0 (21m 49s):

And if it weren't for what happened, that's something that I would still just be staying in that mess. And I've shared this story before, but when I was 18 years old and knew better, I found myself breaking into a warehouse and vandalizing it, and I smelled a cold night in jail. And while I was in there, I was expecting this divine spanking, you know better. But instead, I felt God's love and forgiveness like never before in that worst moment in my mess. And it transformed me. That's why I'm giving my life to tell you and everyone I can that oh about who Jesus is. And it's not just me. There are people around you willing to do the same thing. There were 55 people in our church last year who went public with their faith through baptism.

0 (22m 32s):

And we've seen hundreds of people over the last few years make a declaration of faith in Jesus Christ that they believe. See? See, God is still transforming people because something happened 2000 years ago. 'cause Jesus rose from the dead and because he rose from the dead, anything is possible. Seriously, if God can conquer over death, what else can he conquer over that our sin is nothing. Our mess can be cleaned up in an instant. That he can give us new life and new purpose, that he can take us from sadness to celebration. He can take us from cowards to courageous, and he can give us a power to change the world.

0 (23m 16s):

It's possible because Jesus rose from the dead. It's the exclamation point on what God is doing in the world. I'm telling you this because there's some of you who are already followers of Jesus And. you need to be encouraged. You can have a confidence. You can walk out of here today with your head held high saying, yeah, I'm a mess, but I have a savior who's greater than my mess. 'cause Jesus rose from the dead. You can go out if you're changed with a new power, the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, We can go out here in confidence. And if you're here and you're saying, I don't know if I'm a Christian, don, don't know if I've believed yet, today is the day to believe.

0 (23m 56s):

We are told very clearly in the scriptures in Romans chapter 10 verse nine, this it says, If, you declare with your mouth Jesus' Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. You will be saved. Saved from your mess, saved from your sin, saved from all the stuff in your past, and given a new life and eternal life to live with Jesus forever in heaven. That's available to you, If you believe. but it takes that profession of faith with your mouth. So I'm gonna give you the opportunity to say a simple prayer to make Jesus, your Lord and Savior, to receive what God did on the cross and your life will be transformed. Telling you it transformed me and it transforms you.

0 (24m 39s):

So let's all close our eyes right now. I wanna say this. If you're already a follower, Jesus, would you say this prayer out loud to give courage to somebody around you who needs to say this prayer for the first time And

for all of us, would you please repeat after me? Dear God, I'm a sinner. I'm a mess. I need a savior. Save me. Forgive me in faith I declare Jesus is Lord, fill me with your spirit. Give me the gift of eternal life. Help me to follow you and be transformed for the rest of my life.

0 (25m 26s):

Now with eyes closed, If, you said that prayer for the first time and meant if Jesus today is your first, for the first time is your Lord and Savior, we wanna celebrate with you, And. we even have the gift of a book we want to give you. So on the count of three, put your hand in the air and hold it up. 1, 2, 3, put your hand in the air. If, you made that decision for the first time today. Put your hand high in the air. I see that hand up in the balcony, Lord Jesus. Let's celebrate. Let's celebrate together, If, you're online. Go to [arise Denver dot com slash follow](https://arise-denver.com/follow) and let us know that you made a decision as well. Lord God, we're just so grateful that you're in the business of transforming lives, even to this day that you love us, that you save us, that you give us new life, to follow you, to be transformed.

0 (26m 7s):

I pray that every single one of us would leave with that spirit living in us, that we would go to transform our world, Lord God, and help us know that Christianity won't die because Jesus rose from the dead. Amen.

2 (26m 24s):

Thank you so much for listening to the message today. I'm Matt Wolf, lead pastor at A Rise Church Denver, and we're all about helping people follow Jesus And. we want to help you follow Jesus Because of that, if you're newish, even if you're just checking us out online, go down below in the description and fill out that form at [arise Denver dot com slash new](https://arise-denver.com/new). And if this message has impacted you at all, please go to [rise Denver dot com slash give](https://arise-denver.com/give) So that you can give back and help more people find out the message of Jesus Christ.