



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE, APRIL 4, 2021
MATTHEW 28:1-10

GO AND TELL

MATTHEW 28:1-10 *[After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."]*

Look around you! Look where we are this Easter morning!

We are out here in the garden. But it's gray and cold and it doesn't feel very Eastery for us this morning, even with all these flowers around us, does it?

Why, then, do we come to the garden this morning, all of us outdoors here in the chilly gray? What are we looking for out here?

We think of Easter as bright and shining, with lilies and hyacinths... But when the two Marys went to the tomb, their hearts were broken. The

one they loved, whom they followed even to the cross when the others ran away, is dead. And so is everything they believed, all their hopes. But they come to this tomb, looking for Jesus.

It's easy for us to forget, in our Easter jubilation, that **THEY DON'T KNOW YET**. They are not walking through the garden with anything but sadness. The wonder has not unfolded yet for them; it is still not revealed...

They are looking for Jesus the old way, the way of death. *But when has following Jesus ever meant the old way?* We know Jesus is risen, but we're still so often looking for him in the old, fearful, worldly way – when Jesus is already coming **TO US**, in the new reality of the kingdom of God.

The Resurrection is the revelation that love is stronger than death, that death can't separate us from God, that the world is turned upside-down from power lust to the real love that Jesus showed us and brought us – because even power's fear tactic to put love to death **DOES NOT HOLD**.

And just like throughout his ministry Jesus shook the very ground of religious and political hierarchy, his triumph over death is an earthquake! As the despondent Marys arrive, the whole ground rumbles and trembles and an angel appears and rolls back the stone, right as they're standing there watching. It's so profound and terrifying the guards have keeled over! And the angel casually sits on the rock in the new reality and says to the women, "Do not be afraid." Tall order, don't you think? But... "Do not be afraid! Jesus is not here. He has been raised from the dead and you will see him!"

THIS is why we come to the garden this morning! We come to see Jesus, not the body in the tomb but the Resurrected Savior. And we know about it, so we're not shaking in our shoes. *But we should be!* Because Resurrection is not a tame and manicured bed of flowers. The Resurrection is an earthquake! Nothing will be normal anymore!

And that's GOOD news. We've talked so much over this tough past year about the "new normal," but has there been a more profound "new normal" than death being overcome for love of us?

The women go looking for Jesus, and that's what we're doing this morning, too. But we forget, in our bustle and our trials, that the story of the Bible, the history of God's relationship with a people, from Israel to Jesus and beyond, is the story of God coming TO US!

The women ran to tell the others what the angel said, and Jesus himself came to THEM and said, "Do not be afraid. Tell my brothers they'll see me, too."

Jesus is coming to **us**. We look in our most desolate places, even the ignominious tomb, and he breaks out of the tomb into Resurrected life – to come to US.

The Theologian N.T. Wright preached: "So much western Christianity has been concerned about how we humans find our way to be

with God," we spiritual seekers and intellectuals, "but the Bible is far more concerned with how the creator God fulfills, intends, and promises to come and be with us... In the very place where "our dreams are crushed by an unsympathetic reality... Our broken place. Our broken world."¹

Jesus comes to us, to be with us, God born of a woman to be in our flesh among us. God crucified and buried in the tomb – rises from the dead to BE with us. The Resurrection is the ultimate revelation that love is stronger than death.

The beautiful poem by Jan Richards we just read challenges us to notice "how the emptiness will bear forth a new world that you cannot *fathom* – but on whose edge you stand."

That's us. We know Jesus Christ is risen today! But do we fathom the enormity of it, the world-upside-down glory of it?

The poem reads: "You have been seen, and so you are the blessing. There is no other word you need. There is simply

to go and tell. There is simply to begin.”²

Begin to live in the upside-down world of the Resurrection, the culmination of God continually coming to us, for love of us. This is Easter; this is the new

reality for the followers of Jesus – US. Open your eyes and see Jesus coming to you.

Then, there is simply go and tell. There is simply to begin.



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