

Resurrection of the Lord

March 31, 2024

Easter Sunrise Service

Matthew 28:1–10

“Go and Tell”

1. Our passage presents a chaotic scene at the garden where Jesus had been buried.
 - a. It was early in the morning, dark, with dawn just breaking.
 - b. Our passage says the two Mary’s, two of Jesus’ faithful disciples, were going to the garden tomb to grieve.
 - c. The women, both named Mary, one from the town of Magdala on the Sea of Galilee, another whose identity must have been well known to them, but is lost to history.
 - d. Suddenly, as they drew close, there was an earthquake (the second in back-to-back chapters, one at Jesus’ death and now one at his resurrection!), the rock which had been sealed intentionally at the entrance to the grave was somehow rolled back (no, wait! It was a divine messenger, an angel who rolled it back and made the earthquake happen!)
 - e. Also at the scene were burly Romans soldiers who fainted and became like dead people at the sight of the angel opening the grave
 - i. (the soldiers had been there to prevent anyone from coming to steal Jesus’ body to then claim he was alive)
 - ii. No one had stolen the body, but so much for being the scary guards trying to prevent it
 - f. And then the messenger sounds at first like a receptionist taking a message: The party you’ve tried to reach is not here, but has been raised, just as he said. He asks that you please go quickly and tell the rest of the disciples. Please wait for the beep and then go share the message. Beep!
2. The whole thing was a shocking proclamation delivered by the heavenly messenger with physical drama to expose the deeper spiritual drama taking place.
 - a. The earth shook, and so did the women’s innermost confidence and faith.
 - i. The women, these faithful disciples had been steady, giving, caring.
 - ii. But now they were shaken.
 - iii. The angel knew, which is why the angel said: Don’t be afraid.
 - iv. Why do angels always say: Don’t be afraid!
 - v. It seems that when God acts, that is a common human response.
 1. Fear of what God will do. Of what God could do. Of what God would DARE CREATE!
 - b. Now with this unexpected good news, as they headed back from the now empty grave “with fear and great joy” to tell the others, they were actually met by Jesus on the road, who casually greeted them like this a day like any other day: Shalom! Peace!
 - c. In this Gospel, we read that the women grabbed a hold of Jesus’ feet in overwhelming joy (later this morning you’ll hear the Gospel of John in which it says Mary Magdalene tried and Jesus rebuked her for trying to hang on to him)
 - d. Jesus speaks to the two Mary’s and again says not to be afraid, and asks that they go tell the story they’d witnessed. The story that Jesus has been raised from the grave.

- e. According to this Gospel, the two Mary's were the first ones to go and tell. They were the first ones who experienced the new reality of the risen Jesus.
- 3. It's shocking (and frightening too) how God takes things and turns them upside down.
 - a. It may feel like an emotional earthquake when we perceive God at work in this kind of Easter way
 - i. Death becomes life.
 - ii. Fear becomes faith.
 - iii. Grief becomes joy.
 - iv. Silence becomes proclamation.
 - b. The dawn this Easter morning could not be stopped.
 - i. It may be obscured but not stopped.
 - ii. It may be ignored but not stopped.
 - iii. And the dawn must be proclaimed, as we hear the birds declaring a new day,
 - iv. As the flowers open again from slumber and again follow the sun.
 - c. New life cannot be stopped, not the new life which God ushers in.
 - i. While pain, fear and grief remain very much real, the new life with which God surrounds us is something which cannot be stopped.
 - ii. It can be doubted, but not explained away.
 - iii. It may be denied, but not ignored.
 - iv. And that new life must be proclaimed, by the faithful even if we don't fully understand it, by we the fearful and yet joyful witnesses.
 - d. If Easter is the story of God not letting death have the last word,
 - i. we're called to proclaim God's love in places where fear or oppression pretends death has already won.
 - ii. To proclaim God's grace where people have given up on each other
 - iii. To proclaim God's justice when we dismantle human manipulation of power
- 4. We are here, in the moment when light overcomes night, in the place where death tries to impose its will on life but fails.
 - a. We are here as the two Mary's were, perhaps overwhelmed by grief that paralyzed others, and yet, like them, we are mobilized to get close to one another and to the God we love
 - b. So go and tell of God's triumph over death, just as the two Mary's did, following the example of these our mothers of the Easter message.