

Easter Communion service April 20, 2025, 9am

Matthew 28:1-10

“Go and Tell”

1. Look to your right and look to your left.
 - a. Look straightforward and without cheating, could you say how many people are there in your pew? Go ahead and check. See if you got it right.
 - b. And now, how many people are in the pew behind you?
 - c. Ah trick question!
 - d. Being an eyewitness requires paying attention, especially noticing detail
 - e. It also requires some understanding of what you’re experiencing.
 - f. The act of witnessing something accurately is harder than we might imagine, especially when we are looking at something unexpected, or outside of our wildest imagination.
2. Today’s remarkable Bible story of Easter morning is an eyewitness account of when these two disciples, two women named Mary, encountered a heavenly messenger and then Jesus himself
 - a. The encounter with the heavenly messenger begins with that familiar refrain “fear not”
 - i. Why are heavenly messengers always saying that?
 - ii. And notice who can’t handle the moment: the burly Roman guards fainted at the sight!
 - b. and then the messenger gave an instruction that heightened the shock “come and see” the tomb. Come and be witnesses.
 - i. Already they had become witnesses to the stone supernaturally being rolled away by this heavenly messenger,
 - ii. and now they were to witness and attest that the tomb was empty.
 - c. Don’t be afraid... Come and see... now, go and tell
 - i. And as they were running to the rest of the disciples, they actually encounter Jesus on the road
 - ii. And Jesus greets them like it’s a normal day “Peace!” Shalom!
 - iii. And as they are overcome with emotion and worship him, Jesus repeats what the messenger had said (“Don’t be afraid” and also “go and tell” what you’ve experienced)
 - d. These two disciples were courageous: they may have been surprised by the events, but they were strong and determined
 - i. They became witnesses and opened their hearts to this unexpected moment
 - ii. And they became messengers themselves going to proclaim that Jesus was not dead but had been raised.
 - iii. Their lives would never be the same.
3. We gather here on Easter morning with gratitude
 - a. about the Good News of the gospel that death does not have the last word
 - b. that Jesus was raised, defeating unjust systems which tried to silence him
 - c. that Jesus’ resurrection assures us, by faith, that God will stop at nothing to bring reconciliation between God and human beings, a reconciliation of grace and forgiveness

- d. and we also gather in appreciation of these original witnesses and messengers.
 - i. Because the two Mary's model for us what God seeks from us
 - ii. To be witnesses of God's work among us, and to be courageous messengers of God's presence and actions
- e. Like the two Mary's, we're asked to "come and see" and then to "go and tell" when it comes to how God is present in our everyday life
 - i. One challenge is that we're asked to be attentive to how we notice God's present, however unexpectedly
 - ii. That requires we engage our life with a sense of openness. Come and see
 - 1. We can call it faith, or simply just a willingness to live in the tension of something beyond our human answers
 - 2. Call it even a permission to perceive what appears unbelievable
 - 3. The two Mary's witnessed something they couldn't explain
 - iii. And then "go and tell" requires the courage the two Mary's showed, now telling their story
 - 1. They relay the crucial message: We saw Jesus – he has been raised.
 - 2. Followers of Jesus have been trying to understand and believe that message for a couple of thousands of years.
- 4. The Rev. Betty Mixon, the pastor of the church we attended in Chicago, would challenge us to notice and share signs of the resurrection
 - a. If resurrection means new life against all odds, and it means forgiveness, grace and hope from God, where do we see God's resurrection power at work?
 - i. We see it in the deacons' compassionate care of someone in need/grief
 - ii. In our youth encouraging us to express our feelings and tend to our mental health
 - iii. In the reconciliation as people put aside their differences
 - iv. In neighbors in solidarity with immigrants, LGBTQ people, teachers, others who feel targeted or marginalized
 - v. In cake, ice cream and conversation shared with our friends at the Armory
 - vi. Eating with and advocating for people who are food insecure
 - vii. In people pooling financial resources to address emergency needs of vulnerable people in our neighborhood, (and volunteering to chop wood so people who can't afford heating their house can have heat)
 - viii. I could keep going. God's resurrection power, new life power, grace power is at work in us and through us
 - b. So now, we go and tell those stories and others you are experiencing
 - i. go and tell the story of how God is at work in those who show you kindness and love, who renew your hope.
 - ii. Go and tell the stories of feeling and offering forgiveness
 - iii. Go and tell your story with actions, with art, with service, with words.
- 5. Go and tell Jesus' life-giving resurrection story, a story that God is with us always, seeing us through grief and worry, making us courageous, and sending us to embody a life-giving message of love and grace. Don't be afraid. Come and see. Go and tell...