

*When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

Three women. That is all that were left.

Earlier crowds had been pressing so that Jesus needed to go out in a boat to speak. One day so many were gathered around the house that to get to Jesus some took apart the roof and lowered a man to him. Another day with five loaves and two fish Jesus had fed a multitude of 5000 excluding the women and the children. But on that morning when the Sabbath had ended only three women were left. One moment the crowds had been shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" - the next: "Crucify Him!" Judas who shared that Last Supper with Jesus betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Ten others who were gathered at that table ran away when Jesus was arrested. Peter who followed Jesus all the way to the courtyard of the high priest's house three times swore, "I never knew Jesus." Now, three women were left. Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome. They came with spices to do the last thing they could do for Jesus. With a few other women they had watched from a distance as Jesus was nailed to the cross, watched through the hours of darkness as he was dying there, heard him cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" – saw him breathe his last. They saw Joseph of Arimathea wrap Jesus body in linen and put it into the tomb sealed with a large stone.

Now Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome were on their way to the tomb. "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" they asked one another. But when they looked up they saw that the stone which was very large, had already been rolled back.

That is an interesting phrase that Mark gives us here – when they looked up. Was the tomb on a hill or is Mark giving us a hint about what looking to God can mean – can do for us? Can the very large stones of our lives be rolled back when we look up – look to God?

Inside the tomb they encountered a young man dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised, he is not here. Look, there is the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

Going ahead of you. Surely the women were searching for Jesus in their memories – in their yesterdays. But this man dressed in white promised that Jesus would be in the tomorrows that were coming to Peter and the disciples. And you?

The women, not having found Jesus there and having seen and heard the man in the white robe went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Told to go and tell, they did not but ran away like all the rest. Finally everyone Jesus depended on failed him.

Now that is not what you came to church on Easter to hear – how everyone, every last one failed Jesus. You came to hear Jesus is raised and everything is changed. You and I want to know that joy and happiness and success belong to all who love Jesus. We want the debris of yesterday swept away and a sparkling new tomorrow put in its place. The women should have heard that word and believed and ran to tell the disciples and the whole world about Jesus. But they did not.

Jesus is raised from the dead and still the women are afraid. Jesus is raised from the dead and still our loved ones are dying. Jesus is raised from the dead and families and nations are still divided. Tomorrow the world you left on Friday or Saturday will be back to confront you.

But there is a promise for you today. Jesus will not be found in a grave or a tomb. Jesus is out in this world in the very places you are going. Galilee, Lorain, Sheffield Lake, Westlake. Bagdad, Seoul, Chicago. When you look up you will be finding that stones are rolled away. And people you were sure could never change do. And sometimes with Jesus' help that person is you.

And most of all there is that promise that when you walk the path of crucifixion, and the tomb is your own, that he will be there already to awaken you out of death and to go before you into a life that is eternal.

Even if you should fail Jesus like all the rest – he will never fail you. Jesus is alive in your tomorrows – forever.