

*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2And 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. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7Then 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." 8So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."*

Who do you choose when you have good news? When a baby is born, a new job offered, an A on a test, a bonus at work – when you pick up that phone whose number do you dial? When your daughter takes her first steps whom will you tell? Surely someone who will be as excited about this news as you are - someone who is on your side – rooting for you. Maybe some of us might share our good news with whoever is nearest – stranger or acquaintance but most of us save our special news for the special people in our lives.

On that first Easter morning Jesus' eyes opened out of the darkness of death into the light of life. He had wagered his whole existence on the faithfulness of his Father in heaven. Instead of saving for a retirement home he had given his days to people – common people, everyday people, little people – people like you and me. Healing the sick, teaching, guiding and instructing the twelve disciples - he wanted everyone to know the gracious love of God. His faithfulness was rewarded with the mob crying crucify him – his followers scattered, huddling in fear. Instead of words of reassurance from his friends, mocking, jeering voices assaulted him in his dying. Even the light of day fled away from him as all the world turned dark. And then the very breath of life fled away as well, he was dead.

Friday night, all day Saturday, Saturday night he was dead.

But then in a moment beyond our knowing the Father in heaven breathed breath and life into Jesus once more. Alive – full of joy – who would he see? Who would he tell?

Did he rush to Pilate – awaken him from his sleep - shock him into believing that he was truly the Son of God? Or to Caiaphas, the high priest, who sought Jesus' death?

No he chose to first appear to two women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph. They had come to the tomb – heard the message of the angel that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The angel directed them to go and tell Jesus' disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee. The women left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Then it was that Jesus met them, greeted them. And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. He said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go the Galilee; there they will see me.”

I am told that in those times the testimony of a woman was considered unreliable. Worthless. But when the only Son of God chose to whom he would first appear, it was to women. Maybe it was because they most needed to see him.

It has always been like that with Jesus – he reaches out to those who most need him. O, we fool ourselves into believing that Jesus chooses the most deserving but I do not think there is much evidence for that. People like the rich man who come to Jesus convinced of their own goodness most always go away sad, and people who are desperate and cry out to him again and again receive his help. In our need we are like a field all prepared for planting – ready to receive the seed of faith.

Or maybe it is because he knows what it is like to be in need – to be dead in death and to have the gift of life given once more. He learned that when he himself had run out of possibilities, his Father in heaven had not.

That is what Jesus wants me to tell you this day. When you, in your living run out of possibilities, when your hope in you is deader than death itself, that God is not finished. The one who raised Jesus can raise you also.

And he will keep on raising you right into eternal life.