

*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."*

They came that day without hope – Mary from Magdala and the other Mary. They came that day without hope for that day. Oh, they may have been like Martha whose brother Lazarus had died – when Jesus came and Martha ran to greet him Jesus told her that her brother would rise and Martha said, “Yes, Lord, I know that he will rise at the resurrection on the last day.” Mary from Magdala and the other Mary certainly held that same hope in their hearts, hope that in the end God would raise the dead. But for that Sunday they were living as they were on their way to the tomb of Jesus – for that Sunday they had no hope – just sorrow.

Maybe you and I are like them. Someday God will win the victory – someday God will raise the dead and destroy all that is opposed to God. But for the today which we are living we have no hope. Maybe for you and I God is back there in the Bible delivering the slaves from Egypt and raising Jesus from the dead or out there at the end of time, but here and now we are just on our own. Terrorists, the wealthy ones, the violent lawless ones, the ones who can manipulate the law to favor them and their cronies – it seems like these are the ones with real power in our world now. Does God seem as absent as God seemed when the women heard Jesus cry: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” God did not open the heavens and come down to take Jesus down from the cross – soldiers took him down dead, a lifeless corpse.

Mary from Magdala and the other Mary came to the tomb that day without hope for that day.

Suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. An angel of the Lord had come down from heaven, rolled the stone away – the stone that sealed Jesus’ tomb. When the women arrived the angel who was as bright as lightning was sitting on the stone.

“Don’t be afraid! I know you’re looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He has been brought back to life as he said. Come see the place where he was lying. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has been brought back to life. He is going ahead of them into Galilee. There they will see him.”

The women hurried away from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples.

God had acted. Suddenly God was not just back there in the past and out there in the future – in the angel’s presence and word God was in their present. Right now.

They went with fear and great joy: Believing – on their way to spread the message.

Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them, “Do not be afraid! Go, tell my followers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.”

Was their fear banished? Was their joy complete? Matthew never tells us. Were they able to live in faith and hope - not just for tomorrow but for every today?

Don’t be afraid. Today the word the angel spoke and Jesus himself spoke is now spoken to you. Do not be afraid.

Jesus is alive. Death does not own him – he has won the victory over death. Do not be afraid.

Jesus is alive. Believe in him and death will have not power over you. Do not be afraid.

Jesus is alive. He taught that his followers should pray for their enemies and turn the other cheek and give themselves as servants for others. He taught that God sees what we give and hears what we pray and that we are precious to God – each hair of our head is numbered. When Jesus was crucified it must have seemed that all his talk about trust in God was foolish – look where it got him. But in raising Jesus God said “Yes” to all that Jesus taught and said and did and God said “No” to all that opposes Jesus. Do not be afraid.

Trust that God will be greater in you today than all else – greater in you than harm from storm or violence – greater in you than anything that can happen to your job or to the economy– greater in you than all the killing the violent can do - greater than your own sins and failings – greater than all else.

Do not be afraid. The living Jesus will lead you on the path that leads to life. Listen to him, live trusting in him.

Do not be afraid.