

*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."*

The last word.

Monday and Wednesday and Friday mornings I normally exercise by swimming at EMH Center for Health and Fitness. Most every day Kevin is the lifeguard. As I enter the pool our greetings are brief – if the pool is crowded he may have a suggestion about which lane I should ask someone to share. But otherwise it is just a simple good morning.

But on the way out I have noticed that our conversation may go something like this. "Have a good day - you too – enjoy yourself – and you too – let's hope that it is not too rainy – sure has rained a lot lately and on and on. At first I was just confused about why this saying good bye dragged on. After a while I realized that both Kevin and I wanted to have the last word. In something so simple as saying goodbye here we were going back and forth until one of us gave in – let the other one have the last word.

There is power in the last word.

The Romans and the religious leaders had spoken the last word. Jesus crucified. Silenced forever they were sure. Violence always promises to be the last word – the only word that will matter. In this world the dead never have the last word.

That morning women came to the tomb only to grieve. Their hopes for a new day had been sealed up in that tomb with the corpse of Jesus. They had hoped that the love and healing they had found in Jesus would go on and on.

But Jesus' enemies had had the last word.

But suddenly the earth rolled and swayed under their feet. A messenger from God, an angel, rolled back the stone that had sealed the tomb, sat on the stone and greeted the women with these words, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised. Come, see the place where he lay. Then 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.’”

“In fear and great joy the women ran to tell the disciples.”

“Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ The women came to him, took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

“Do not be afraid,” Jesus said to them, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, there they will see me.”

His enemies did not have the last word – Jesus did.

In the reading from Acts Peter tells Gentiles about Jesus – about his being anointed with the Holy Spirit, his doing good and healing, his death and resurrection and his appearances to Peter and others after his resurrection. And then Peter says this: “Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.” That is the message Peter says he was sent to proclaim. Jesus will have the last word. Not Moses – not you – not me but Jesus has been set apart by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

We say it in the creed – he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Jesus will speak the last last word about you. There will be no appeal to a higher court. After all my words and all your words are spoken, Jesus will speak.

Peter said one more thing in that sermon: “All the prophets testify about Jesus that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

The first word the angel spoke to the women that Easter morning was, “Do not be afraid.” After his greeting this was Jesus word to the women also, “Do not be afraid.”

This Jesus who says, “Do not be afraid” he is the one who will judge you. This Jesus in whose name sins are forgiven – he is the one who will judge you.

Jesus will have the last word about you.

Do not be afraid.