

## **Hear now the Easter Story as told in the gospel of Matthew 28:1-11 from the Message**

28 <sup>1-4</sup> After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.

<sup>5-6</sup> The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.

<sup>7</sup> "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message."

<sup>8-10</sup> The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

### **This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God**

#### **"There is Nothing to Fear" – Rev. Christina Thompson**

We have been living in a fearful, crazy time. Between the Coronavirus and the earthquake and all of this isolation, there is a sense of wondering if this has become the new normal. There is still a sense in our lives of fear, grief and unknown.

The women and the disciples who followed Jesus had to walk through a very difficult and horrifying last few days. They watch Jesus be betrayed, arrested and then watched as he carries his cross to the hill where he is crucified. They experience an earthquake as Jesus breaths his last. Then their friend and teacher's body is laid into a tomb and a large rock rolled over it. Talk about final. Talk about fear, grief, unknown.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb in that same sense of fear, grief, unknown. It is interesting to note that they come not to anoint his body but simply to see the tomb. As they get there, they are met with another earthquake.

You can imagine them saying “Really? Another earthquake? We have had enough.”

Not only is there an earthquake, but an angel appears in this earthquake who rolls back the stone and then proceeds to sit on it.

If they were fearful before, they have to be terrified now.

But then the angel says what all angels say “Do not be afraid.” They must learn this in angel 101 school!

“There is nothing to fear here. I know you’re looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.” (Matthew 28:5-6 The Message)

There are three sentences in this story that speak to the women’s situation and speak to our own lives. This is the first one. *There is nothing to fear here.*

The angel says the same to us and speaks the word of God to us. “There is nothing to fear here. I know what you have gone through in this last month as you have dealt with the isolation and fear of the Corona Virus. I know the fear you have experienced. I know you wonder when this new normal will end. But there is nothing to fear.”

There is nothing to fear? Really--- Sure there is. People are still dying from this virus. People are losing their jobs. The rest of this school year will be spent at home. We are isolated. We can’t even worship together on Easter morning. Nothing is the way it was and probably never will be.

“There is nothing to fear here.” Hear Jesus come and say those words to your heart. “There is nothing to fear here because I am present with you. There is nothing to fear here. I have beat out death and evil of the world so that you would have life abundantly. There is nothing to fear here.” Hear those words spoken gently and in love.

Then the angel says to the women,

<sup>7</sup>“Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.’ That’s the message.”

These words from the angel and the ability to look at the place where Jesus' body had been laid, allows Mary and Mary to move from fear to joy.

They leave the tomb having been changed by this message from the angel. They waste no time leaving the tomb and they leave full of wonder and joy. They have not even seen Jesus yet and already God has turned their fear and sadness into wonder and joy.

God is turning our fear and sadness and feelings of unknown into joy and wonder as well.

*You will see him there.* This is the second phrase that offers us the hope for this time. "You will see him there" is the good news of the story. Not only is there nothing to fear, go tell his disciples and you will see Jesus You will see Jesus.

That is the good news. Because of the power of Easter, Jesus who had been a dead body just three days before, is now alive in the glory of God. And in the power of the resurrection, not only did the women see an angel, they do see Jesus again.

We will see Jesus--- this Good news is for us as well as the two Mary's. It is the promise of God that no matter what happens in our life, no matter how long this coronavirus quarantine lasts—we are assured of the promise that We will see Jesus. We will see Jesus in our houses, in the people we see walking outside, in the ways that people are helping each other.

So the women go as the angel tells them, running from the tomb to tell the disciples the good news. But they do not get very far when scripture says "Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there." (Matthew 28:9-10 The Message)

Jesus meets them.

Jesus meets us.

That is the third phrase of this story that offers us hope. *Jesus meets us.* Not only do we have the promise that we will see Jesus, we have the assurance that Jesus meets us right where we are. Jesus comes to us in this crazy time and says to us—"I am here. You are not alone." We do not have to have it all figured out, or have

100% faith that God is present. Jesus comes to just as we are, in our weakness moments, in our doubts and fear.

Not only does Jesus come to us and assures us that we have the strength of Christ with us, Jesus gives us the strength to do more than just survive. In the power of Christ's resurrection, we can live abundant lives. We can live lives that reach out and touch people even as we keep our distance.

I see this in people waving to people. I see this in sidewalk chalk art, in phone calls made to people. Jesus's strength and present is evident in people sharing resources, making sure people have the food they need all the while keeping our physical distance. This might be a crazy time, but God is very much working to bring blessings. And that comes from the power of the resurrection. It comes from a God who loves us so much to send Jesus, who showed us that love on a cross and who then magnified that love and power through a empty tomb. And then God calls us to share that love with our neighbors and our neighborhood.

You have nothing to fear here. You will see him. Jesus met them. Jesus Meets us . All ways that this story allows us to not just survive this time, but to live in wonder and joy just like Mary and Mary.

"The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said." (Matthew 28:5-6 The Message)

Amen