**April 9, 2023 Matthew 28:1-10**

 ***He Lives!!!***

**Scripture:** *Matthew 28:1-10 NRSV*

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

**Notes:**

1. The story of Jesus seems to come ***full*** ***circle*** here.
	1. God is up to something ***extraordinary***.
	2. ***Immanuel***is an Easter promise.
	3. He is here with us because he is ***risen***.
2. The ***Third*** ***Day*** is an important note here.
	1. Jesus says he is going to give the sign of ***Jonah***.
	2. The women ***risk*** their lives and safety.
	3. The disciples keep the doors ***locked***.
3. They are looking for Jesus in the ***Wrong*** ***Place***.
	1. Jesus told his disciples he was going to ***rise*** again.
	2. The disciples don’t seem to ***get*** ***it***.
	3. ***Salvation*** and ***victory*** are going to come through submission, sacrifice, death, and resurrection.
	4. Jesus did not ***leave*** the world in an expected way,
4. ***Where*** Is He?
	1. We see an ***empty*** ***tomb***.
	2. Jesus ***goes*** to where his disciples are.
	3. When they despair, Jesus ***meets*** them where they are.
	4. ***Look*** up and see him!
5. God’s disciples were not ***forgotten*** or ***abandoned***.
	1. We have ***hope*** no matter what we face.
	2. We are also ***empowered*** by the Holy Spirit.
	3. We can be ***confident*** that Christ is with us.
	4. We are ***loved***, we are not alone, and there *i*s hope.

**Script:**

Have you ever put something down and went back after it and it was not there? I am notorious at sitting something down and forgetting where I placed it. Oh, I think I know where I put it, but when I go to get it; it’s gone. When Jan and I are working in the shop, she doesn’t let me hold the pencil, because it never fails, I will mislay it.

And I know I am not the only one who does this. I have seen my father do it. I have seen my brother and brothers-in-law do it. I have seen others do it as well. Perhaps you are guilty of doing it; don’t be ashamed of it, acknowledge it.

But today in our sermon passage, we find that they have placed Jesus in a tomb, Only to return a few days later and find him missing. It’s not like they were expecting him to get up and walk away. There were guards placed outside his tomb, the large rock over the entrance was sealed by officials, where could he be? Stand and Join me in the reading of our sermon Passage found in Matthew 28:1-10.

 *(1)After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. (2)And 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. (3)His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. (4)For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. (5)But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. (6)He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (7)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.' This is my message for you." (8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. (9)Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. (10)Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Matthew 28:1-10 NRSV*

The story of Jesus seems to come full circle here. A story that begins with an angel’s declaration to a young woman named Mary, ends with an angel’s declaration of the resurrection of the Lord; a declaration to two women named Mary— Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” (most likely the sister of Lazarus and Martha). Both angels bring greetings to not be afraid in moments of tremendous fear. Both also bring the important message that God is up to something extraordinary. Ultimately, both times it is a message of *Immanuel*: God is with us.

We don’t tend to think of *Immanuel* as an Easter promise, but it is as appropriate in these Easter texts as in any. When the women are crying at the tomb, they long and hope for God to hear their cries. They hope God has not abandoned them. They watched him die a gruesome death. They know they are likely targets now, having been seen in close relationship with Jesus. Fear, grief, hopelessness, and despair intermingle at the tomb. When the women show up on the third day, they don’t anticipate resurrection. They don’t anticipate the way their world will be completely transformed, but it’s safe to say they longed for it.

And it’s still a message for us. We still see the traumas in our world, the violence, the pain, the devastation of illness and death. We can enter into this space on Easter Sunday with the cry for *Immanuel* to draw near. On the verge of hopelessness, in the midst of despair, we wonder, *Does Christ hear us? Does Christ see us? Is God here with us?* If we are open and if we are willing to look beyond the grave, we will find that he is here with us because he is risen!

The Third Day is an important note here. Third days are important throughout Scripture. In Genesis 22:1–14, God rescues Isaac from the altar of sacrifice on the third day, providing a ram in his place (). In Exodus 19:1–15, God reveals himself to God’s people on Mount Sinai on the third day, reminding them who provides and who keeps promises (). IN 2 Kings 20:1–11, God heals and restores on the third day (). Jonah is in the great fish for three days (Jonah 1:17). This one is especially important because, when Jesus says in Matthew that he is going to give the sign of Jonah, he is indicating his own third-day resurrection.

Matthew and John both emphasize that it was early in the morning. Since these Jewish women wouldn’t go to prepare a body on the Sabbath, the implication is that they are arriving as soon as they are allowed by religious law. In John 20:19, we are told it is evening of the first day of the week when the disciples are locked together in a room, which means Jesus’s appearance to the women at the tomb in the morning and to the disciples in the locked room in the evening occur on the same day. We can make multiple inferences from these details. The women risk their lives and safety by going to the tomb. The disciples keep the doors locked “for fear of the Jewish leaders.” Their fears are warranted, yet the women risked their safety to visit the tomb while the rest of the disciples stayed safely behind locked doors.

It seems they are Looking for Jesus in the Wrong Place Jesus told his disciples repeatedly that he was going to rise again. Matthew 16:4 NRSV An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.Matthew 16:21 NRSV From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. Matthew 17:22-23 NRSV As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, (23) and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed. The disciples never seemed to understand what Jesus meant.

The women were present at the crucifixion. Matthew 27:55-56 NRSV Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. (56) Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. John 19:25 NRSV And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Some of those present at the crucifixion very likely were also present for Jesus’s raising of Lazarus from the dead. Watching someone whom you know has the power to raise the dead back to life, die themselves, would be very confusing indeed. This is another case of the disciples not seeming to fully understand what Jesus is doing. Throughout the Matthew and John narratives, the disciples don’t seem to get it. Some think Jesus is in the process of raising up a violent political revolution. Some scholars even believe this was a motivating factor in Judas’s betrayal— that he thought Jesus was moving too slowly and that getting him arrested would get the ball rolling on the hostile takeover of the Roman Empire. Others are looking for salvation in some other way. Regardless, they don’t seem to grasp that salvation and victory are going to come in an unusual way—through submission, sacrifice, death, and resurrection. So, instead of viewing Jesus’s crucifixion as the fulfillment of God’s plan, they view it as the loss of hope.

In the same way Jesus did not leave the world in an expected way, he also didn’t enter it in the expected way either. He was born into a messy situation with an unwed mother. Those who heard about Jesus’s birth initially were outcasts, poor, a woman (Elizabeth), and gentiles (the Magi). He continued to cross religious boundaries of clean and unclean. He preached peace, compassion, mercy, and love when the prevailing thought was that the Messiah would overtake oppressors by violent or powerful means. He even entered Jerusalem in ways that illustrated he was coming as a peaceful sacrifice instead of a conquering king.

I know they had to be wondering, “Where Is He?” We see an empty tomb in both the Matthew and John texts, but Jesus isn’t far off. In John, Mary encounters Jesus in the garden. In Matthew, the women encounter him on the way to Galilee.

Jesus goes to where his disciples are. He approaches Mary. He meets the women on their way. He appears in the locked room. He appears a week later to Thomas specifically. When they despair of hope, Jesus meets them where they are. He is present and shows up in the midst of his disciples’ grief and pain. All they have to do is look up and see him! This is the *Immanuel* God—God with us—who has shown up to be present with us once again, this time not as an infant but as one who conquered sin and death. This time he is not in a state of vulnerability but has resurrection power.

The fear, doubt, and hopelessness of the disciples does not disqualify them from encountering the resurrected Christ. In spite of all his teachings and warnings about what was going to happen, Jesus doesn’t shame any of them for looking for him in the tomb, for hiding in a locked room, or for doubting the resurrection. He embraces all of them where they are, and their lives are transformed by his presence. They were commissioned to go out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they go.

God’s disciples were not forgotten or abandoned, and neither are we! God is still with us. The power of resurrection is still with us! We have hope no matter what we face. Even when we struggle, even when we doubt, even when we are afraid, we are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry the resurrection of Jesus into the world.

We are people of the third day. People of the resurrection. Our entire week has been transformed because of the resurrection happening on the first day of the week. Our entire lives should be transformed by the resurrection because Christ has conquered sin and death. We no longer need to live without hope. We no longer need to reside in tombs of death. In our worst moments of grief, hopelessness, and fear we can be confident that Christ is with us because he is risen!

*Immanuel* isn’t a message only for Christmas. It’s the message of Easter too—that God hasn’t forgotten us. There is no distance that Jesus wouldn’t go to be with us, including surrendering to suffering and death. We are loved, we are not alone, and there *i*s hope. Sin is defeated, and death is destroyed through the power of the resurrection. We are not alone because he is risen! He lives. And because he lives we can face each new day. Because he lives we can experience life without fear. And today if you did not already know it, He holds the future and each new day in the palm of his hands. Life is worth living just because he lives; because of Easter morning, because of the resurrection, because of Jesus.