

### **Matthew 28:1-10**

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

### **Easter Proclamation**

Dawn breaks. After a final supper, after a long night of anguished prayer, after betrayal and denial, the shadow of the cross still looms, the complete darkness of the sealed tomb. But "After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."

And what do they find but an angel, a messenger of the Lord, sitting on top of the now rolled away stone. I imagine the scene of the angel with a giant smile on her face, dangling her legs like a child having the best day ever. Victory had been won, death is no more, the world has been changed and there is no greater joy than in that garden, in that empty tomb. "He is not here - I know you came to see Jesus, but he is not here! Look in the tomb, see for yourself, he is risen, like he said, he is alive, it is a new day!" I wonder if this is what Jesus meant when he told his disciples that they needed to become like a little child to enter the kingdom. I wonder if it is the joy, the exuberance, the feeling of sitting on the top of the boulder and grinning from ear to ear.

Sometimes, as adults, we can let experience and anxiety cause us to become bitter and pessimistic. We are presented with hope or joy and we react with doubt and we look for the flaws. Sometimes we grow tired of the tasks we have been called to, to care for our family, to care for our neighbors, the cooking and cleaning, the bills and the dishes, the hosting of dinner, the trips to the doctors. Some of us come exhausted by the work, and concerned about what is next. But this morning we are greeted by an angel sitting on a rock, glorious in her happiness. And we must smile, we must become like the victorious child, full of hope and love, full of joy and energy.

Death has lost its sting, sin no longer holds dominion. He is not here! He is risen! Go and tell the others!

**Jeremiah 31:1-6**

At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God."

**Matthew 28:11-15**

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

## Sermon

When I was about four years old I was fascinated with letters and writing and my name. If I had a piece of paper and a pencil, I would probably write my name on the paper and some other less coherent drawings. At the same time, I began to get interested in the scientific method. I didn't know what that was, but I understood the concept of testing a hypothesis. Things like, I wonder how an aerosol spray works and then pushing the button down and watching the mist come out. That discovery led to another. Did you know that you could spray an aerosol spray onto a window mesh screen and you could write your initials? I discovered and rediscovered this fact as I made my way around the house, finding every window screen and creating my four year old graffiti, a glorious drawing of my initials, D... H... For some reason, my mother was not as impressed with my discovery and art work.

It was also in this time frame that I discovered something about wood stain. Did you know that most wood furniture is stained a different color, usually darker, on the outside. How does a four year old discover this, you ask? With a butter knife of course. A little scratching with the rough edge would cut a thin line through the stained coat and leave the lighter color of the raw wood to be seen. So I tested my theory by carving my full name on the bench of our family piano... Daren Hofmann.

My mother was not impressed with this discovery as well. "Daren James Hofmann, come in here! What is this?... What mom?... How did your name get on our piano bench son?... I don't know, Tasha must have done it!... Your sister carved your name into the bench?... Yah, who would be dumb enough to carve their own name?"

As a parent, I am amazed at the ability of children to think on their feet and discover new things. I am also amazed at how they think they are so sly and devious, and yet how transparent they are. She looked right through my lie, knew I had done it, and knew that I would be punished.

Later that night, when we were reflecting over the incident, my mother told me. "You know, I was upset with you when you damaged my furniture... Yes... But I was even more upset when you tried to lie about it... But I didn't want to get in trouble... You know, the truth always comes to light. It may take a few minutes or a day. It may take a month or even a year. But the truth always comes to the light.

We all have stories that are told, stories about the horrible first date and the fact that she still went on a second date. Stories about the birth of a child or grandchild. Stories about our silly aunt or the uncle and aunt that has the wonderful pets. There are the stories about grandma cooking in the kitchen with the help of little hands as sou chefs and stories of grandpa driving the tractor, pulling the haywagon and making a campfire for smores. So many stories that are told, and retold, to the point that they become part of the family legends. And all the legends are based on the truth.

Today we encounter two stories. The first story is about a group of radical followers of a rebel commander. Devoted followers who wanted to create a myth, a story that this radical teacher who was killed for his beliefs was not raised from the dead. A story about how they came in the night and stole the mans body from the tomb so that they could say that he was no longer there, but alive and well.

This was the story of the guards, the story of the chief priest and scribes who told the people of Jerusalem and they told each other. It is still a story today, there are many who question the resurrection of Jesus, many who question if Jesus was event a historical person who lived and died, or is he more of an idea, a fictional character created to further a political, theological agenda. That was the first story being told.

And then there was the story of the women. A story about an earthquake and an angel, a stone rolled back from the grave and guards who had fainted. A story about encountering Jesus, and being told to go and tell the disciples that he will meet them in Galilee. But this is more than a story, this is an event.

It is the event of resurrection that stirs the women to go and get the disciples. It is the event of resurrection that calls the disciples to continue the ministry of Christ in the world. It is the event of the resurrection the compels believers to gather together in the temple and in synagogues, in homes and in catacombs and in churches. To become the body of Christ, a worshipping community called in his name to love and serve the world. It is the event of resurrection that gives birth to the church and extends it to the Jews and Gentiles. And the women, and the disciples, and all the faithful witnesses tell the story of that morning, that wondrous event.

And we tell the story as well, because we have heard the story and more importantly we have experienced the event. Christ is alive, he can be seen in all that is true and good and kind and loving. Christ is alive, and he can be seen in the forgiveness offered to an enemy, the warm meal offered to the hungry, and a place to rest for the homeless. Christ is alive, in the small acts of kindness of a stranger and the constant love of a child. Christ is alive, even in the pain and suffering and grief, walking beside us and carrying us through. Christ is alive, in the family that continues to tell the story. The truth has come in the light of the morning, Christ has risen, he has risen indeed! Amen