

Easter Sunday 2023

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. 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."

Sermon:

We don't know how many angels dance on the head of a pin. Evidently it takes only one to trigger earthquakes. In just three days, two seismic shifts signal God's action ensuring nothing will ever be the same again.

On Jesus execution day, the earth shuddered, rocks shattered, crypts yawned open and even the curtain in the temple was torn top to bottom as if God had reached down and personally ripped it in half.

Resurrection dawn breaks as the ground quakes and an immovable stone sealing the tomb skitters off to the side.

Shaken, the guards see the sizzling presence of God's messenger and they are literally scared stiff. The Empire's bogus claim to the right to determine life and death crumbles. Even death is undone...though it hardly happens.

The earthquake rattles beneath Mary Magdalene and Mary too. They too see the angel dazzling in transfiguration brilliance. They too spy the stone flicked away from the tomb's opening. These women have already seen too much, really. Intrusive sights, sounds and smells from execution day likely flashed back that resurrection morning.

The tremor-triggering angel reassures Mary and Mary Magdalene that an empty tomb and a holy messenger need not be feared. Let the soldiers stand stock still as statues. Even now, it's time for Mary Magdalene and to Mary to get moving.

Preacher Dr. Mindy Quivik paints poetry when she describes Mary and Mary Magdalene walking arm in arm in obedience even as joy and fear hold hands. Together, Mary Magdalene and Mary, declare to the disciples who out of fear fled on Friday, that they will see Jesus in Galilee.

We might know something of fear and joy holding hands as we live in a world permanently changing as unheard of storms ravage coastlands and the icecaps we thought as almost eternal melt away. We might know something of fear and joy in lockstep as we watch empires invade and tin pot dictator wannabes rage...and oppress. And where might we see Jesus? He tells us we'll see him...

where two or more are gathered in his name
in the faces of the poor, the hungry, the sick, the unjustly imprisoned and the refugee
we'll see Jesus as we carry out his charge to build community and nurture others to follow him...
we'll see him everywhere and always, this promised God-with us.

Matthew's Gospel concludes with Jesus ascending to heaven. To all of us gathered arm in arm as joy mingles with fear, Jesus says, "I am with you always, even to the end of time."