

## Sermon Notes for Easter - April 21

Matthew 28:1-10. "Quake. And Aftershock"

This is not going to be a compare-and-contrast-type of message. If you read Matthew 28, then Mark 16, then Luke 24 and finally John 20, you are going to read about the Resurrection and the women at the tomb. You are *not* going to get all the details in perfect alignment. Why?

Have you ever been to court, even traffic court, and had 2 or 3 or 4 people describe an event? Every witness is going to have a different emphasis and a different point of view. Every witness is going to have a few details that may not "fit" with the other witnesses.

At the resurrection, we have different witnesses. We also have 4 Gospels written for 4 differing audiences. That is part of the reason I love the Bible; it is a bit messy, like life. I think that having things NOT say exactly the same thing is MORE, not less valid.

Let's start:

Matthew 28:1-10 (The Voice)

After the Sabbath, as the light of the next day, the first day of the week, crept over Palestine, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb *to keep vigil*. (So it isn't dark, it is sunrise - and the women aren't going to anoint the body. The women are there to either pay homage, or perhaps say another goodbye, or...could it be that the women believed Jesus when He said earlier that He would rise from the dead?)

**2** Earlier there had been an earthquake. (Earthquakes are referenced 15 times in the Bible. There are even fewer times when someone is in an earthquake. When the Lord passed before Elijah in 1 Kings {our offertory text} - Elijah experiences an earthquake. Just before Jesus dies, people think Jesus is calling upon Elijah - and then Jesus dies - and there is an earthquake. I don't think that is coincidence. The curtain at the temple to the Holy of Holies was torn in two. Now we have another earthquake. Can there be any more dramatic revelation from God but that part of the announcement is the foundation, the earth itself, is shaking?) A messenger of the Lord had come down from heaven and had gone to the grave. He rolled away the stone and sat down on top of it. (Note that this angel has kind of a funky attitude and it was the angel, not the earthquake, that rolled the stone away.)

He *veritably* glowed. He was vibrating with light. *His clothes were light, white like transfiguration*, like fresh snow. The soldiers guarding the tomb were terrified. They froze like stone. (Another version says, "the guards trembled and became like dead men." Do you know what happens to your bodily functions at the point of death? They release! The big, burley conquerors - trained in torture and killing - have messed themselves.)

The messenger spoke to the women, *to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.*

**Messenger of the Lord:** Don't be afraid. (The angel doesn't say this to the guards - but to the women! The women can be shook up, but not fearful! The guards can be fearful and quake!) I know you are here keeping watch for Jesus who was crucified. But Jesus is not here. He was raised, just as He said He would be. Come over to the grave, and see for yourself. (God is not having a conniption because God is angry with the world. Jesus utilized signs

and miracles so that folks could realize God's grace and love. Now God is utilizing the dramatic to reveal that Jesus is NOT dead. That grace and love win!) And then go straight to His disciples, and tell them He's been raised from the dead and has gone on to Galilee. You'll find Him there. Listen carefully to what I am telling you. (Please note, the angel gave the women the task of being the apostles to the apostles!)

The women were both terrified and thrilled, and they quickly left the tomb and went to find the disciples and give them this *outstandingly good* news. But while they were on their way, they saw Jesus Himself. (Jesus breaks into their ministry - and if we let Him, He will break into ours!)

**Jesus** (*greeting the women*): Rejoice. (What an understatement! - death and slavery to the forces of evil have been conquered for all time to those who wish to accept God's love...UH, yeah, that is reason to REJOICE!)

The women fell down before Him, kissing His feet and worshiping Him.

**Jesus:** Don't be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee. Tell them I will meet them there.

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

**THANKS BE TO GOD!** Amen.

I can't explain how Jesus came back from the dead. I can remember that at His birth - there were lots of "Don't be afraid's." At His death there is an earthquake and God will not be contained to the Holy of Holies. At the resurrection there is an earthquake and Jesus will not be contained in the tomb.

This is reason to rejoice.

Now William Willimon told a story about a football player that needed to take an easy class to get his grade point average up. An advisor tells him to take this class on ornithology. The football player was surprised it was about birds - but he liked birds and he studied hard - where they lived and what they ate and how they flew and what they sounded like. At the one and only final exam, he thought he was ready for the test.

The professor pulled down a giant chart with birds - but only their feet and legs. The students were supposed to identify the birds by this limited point of view. The football player went ballistic and shouted to the professor: "This is the dumbest and most disappointing exam I have ever seen or even heard about!"

The professor was incensed. "You upstart! You impudent student! I'm going to report you to the dean and hopefully, you will be kicked out of this school. What is your name?"

The ballplayer stepped back, hiked up his trousers and said, "You're so smart, you tell me!"

Now, I'm not the smartest guy - but if you have a limited point of view of God - especially of a god that wants to punish you for everything - then maybe you and the guards have something in common. And I can tell you something else, I'm no angel and I don't want you to have any "accidents."

I want you to follow Jesus, Who loves you. I want you to follow Jesus Who came back from the dead to show you His great love. He knows your name, even if the only thing he has to go by is your feet.

Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed!**

AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE!