### The Resurrection of Jesus

**20**Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. **2**So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” **3**Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. **4**The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5**He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. **6**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, **7**and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. **8**Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **9**for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. **10**Then the disciples returned to their homes.

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

**11**But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A1-18&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26868a)] into the tomb; **12**and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. **13**They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” **14**When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **15**Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” **16**Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A1-18&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26873b)] “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). **17**Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” **18**Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

### The Resurrection of Jesus

**28**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[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A1-10&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24199a)] lay. **7**Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A1-10&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24200b)] 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.”

 God of life,
through Jesus Christ
you have bestowed upon the world the light of life.
Sanctify this new fire,
and grant that our hearts and minds may also be kindled
with holy desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising,
that we may attain to the feast of everlasting light;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Its no longer Friday, Sunday is here.

The Bible is full of appearances by angels from Genesis to the last stories of Revelations. Angels do all kinds of things.  They are warriors, protectors, hurry-uppers, chastisers, comforters, guides, worship leaders, and singers.

But the main role of an angel is to be a messenger for God. Many of their messages have to do with telling people about pregnancies: Sarah and Abraham, Samson’s mother, Zechariah, and the Virgin Mary.  They also tell us of the good news of the birth of Christ on Christmas night.

And of all the amazing messages from God they shared I think I would be safe in saying that this Easter gig may have topped them all. This angel came down from heaven on Easter morning, sets off an earthquake, rolls the stone away from the tomb and then sits on top of the stone!  He got to tell the very frightened women that Jesus had risen from the dead. It doesn’t get any better than that. It still is, and always will be, the greatest message ever told.

With every gift there is a responsibility.  With every “so what” there is a “now what”.  With every great truth we need a “therefore”

And the angels message is no different- The angel doesn’t stop with the good news of resurrection.  There is a directive, a call to action, a this is now what you need to do- so go do it. I read a great line-   Easter is not a noun but a verb.  Easter people believe and then live the story. Wow… that is such a powerful statement.

So….what is the angel’s marching orders for the women and for us on this rather not normal Easter Sunday 2020?

The first part of what they are asking… not just Mary but us always is Don’t fear- Do not be afraid I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

It is understandable that these women were afraid.  The whole weekend was a fearful mess with the crucifixion and fear of retribution by the Jews, and now this earthquake.  This angelic figure that appeared like bright lightning was not a little bit of a shock either.

When the angel said “don’t be afraid” it is not because this wasn’t a fearful thing.  It was.  Jesus’ disciples were in a boat once with Jesus during a pretty violent storm. Being afraid is natural part of being human.  And many of us are afraid of this uncertain time as well.

We are experiencing a great deal of fear right now with the Coronavirus epidemic and all the sheltering in place type of restrictions and physical distancing is so that we do not get sick and spread the virus.  We have a healthy fear of this kind of disease. But there is lots of fear about the economy, our way of life, our loved ones, our health care workers, fear upon fear!

When the angel said “don’t’ be afraid” he was talking about ultimate things here. Don’t be afraid because-   Death was swallowed up into victory. Don’t be afraid because -Love beat out hate. Don’t be afraid because- Satan was defeated. Don’t be afraid because-  Resurrection is now our ultimate hope. It doesn’t mean that this life is free from fear-making things.  It means that we can count on new life after we die. We can count on God to be with us through the storms. So come what may we have the final win in the game: eternal life.

One of Mhari’s favorite movies Les Misérables written by the French writer Victor Hugo. Mr Hugo also wrote about a bird…who was sitting on the end of a branch during a wind-storm.  He wrote “Be like the bird that, passing on her flight awhile on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her, and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings.”

This quote perfectly encapsulates Easter. This is the meaning of faith, not fearing because you know in the end that “God’s got this,” you’ve got “wings” and you are safe in the arms of God in the end.  This is a gift of Easter.

The second part of what the angel shares with Mary is be sure- They didn’t need to roll away the rock. They didn’t need to invite Mary in to look at the tomb- but it was important for her witness to be sure and God and his messengers knew that.

The angel tells the women to “Come and see the place where he lay.”  The angel removed the stone not to let Jesus out but to let the women in so they would have 100% proof of the resurrection.

God wants us to be sure about this resurrection reality as well. He wanted them to have proof so they would be convincing evangelists.  There is nothing worse than someone whose heart is not sure.

God wanted to make sure that Mary believed in what she was doing- mush like a really good salesperson has to believe in their product to sell it to you.

God wants his witnesses to be totally convinced about Jesus’ resurrection because the effectiveness of the mission depends on it.

Remember Jesus went back to Thomas when he missed the first post-resurrection visit.  He told Thomas to put his fingers in the nail marks and his hand in his side so that he would be sure. Jesus wanted to make sure that Thomas no longer doubted.

Hold fast to the truth of the gospel.  Jesus died for you and rose again and he is coming again.  Ask God to give you the assurance of your salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit. God wants your heart to be sure, very sure.

The angel told the women to go tell the disciples the good news and be quick about it. Good news needs to shared!  You can’t keep it to yourself.

Friends, we’ve got better news during this strange time than what store has toilet paper or hamburger….and that is news we have no problem sharing with others.   We have amazing news to share. News that Jesus gives us abundant life, eternal life, forgiveness of our sins and a story to tell.

If Easter is just about having a video service or having an Easter service at church whenever we are all able to gather again with the lilies and candy for the kids, new clothes and ham dinner, then it isn’t Easter at all. And although some of that is missed because it gives us that sense of normalcy- we are learning that the church being empty is as powerful as the tomb being empty. True Easter is a life-time of telling people about Jesus -of genuine joy and peace and also by the works that you do.

I learned a little about a woman named “Elizabeth the New Martyr.” She lived Easter everyday until her death. She lived in Russia in the mid 1800’s. She was married to a Grand Duke in Russia and they lived a life of luxury but then he was assassinated and she dedicated her life to the poor, gave away everything and with the proceeds opened a home in Moscow. They took care of orphans and they devoted much time to prayer. She was a living disciple of Christ- Such a witness that many joined her movement and they started a hospital, and numerous social agencies.  She was martyred by the Bolshevik regime but was heard singing as they threw her and her workers into a mineshaft with grenades. She sang because she knew where she was going.  Many were converted because of her witness. She told the good news and did the work of Christ and gave hope and life to many.  That’s an Easter witness.

And the final part of the angels message- follow Jesus…

The angel told the women that Jesus would go ahead of them to Galilee and they were to see him there.  Jesus always goes ahead and leads us in the path we are to go. We don’t have to guess what we are to do.  There is a living God who shows us the way.

The truth in the life of a Christian, is that we follow Jesus and obey his word and commands and we’ve got all the direction we need. We were given the instruction manual. He goes ahead of us and has work for us to do and God is not shy about telling you what that would be.

So what is the Lord leading you to do right now?  Easter people are always following Jesus into some interesting paths.  Jesus calls us to be in ministry with the poor those without a voice. Do you know people you can help?  Jesus calls us to bind up broken relationships and make peace with those who have hurt you. Do you have anyone like that in your life?  Jesus leads us into mission and ministry always and when we say “yes” it can be an amazing adventure.  You will always have the Lord at your side.

May you have a blessed Easter!  Follow the angel’s instructions and you will be living the resurrection story in real time: don’t be afraid, be sure of what you believe, tell the story and follow Jesus.   Amen.

### A Song of Victory

# **Psalm 118:1-2**

**1**O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
    his steadfast love endures forever!

**2**Let Israel say,
    “His steadfast love endures forever.”

# **Psalm 118:14-24 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

**14**The Lord is my strength and my might;
    he has become my salvation.

**15**There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
**16**    the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
    the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”
**17**I shall not die, but I shall live,
    and recount the deeds of the Lord.
**18**The Lord has punished me severely,
    but he did not give me over to death.

**19**Open to me the gates of righteousness,
    that I may enter through them
    and give thanks to the Lord.

**20**This is the gate of the Lord;
    the righteous shall enter through it.

**21**I thank you that you have answered me
    and have become my salvation.
**22**The stone that the builders rejected
    has become the chief cornerstone.
**23**This is the Lord’s doing;
    it is marvelous in our eyes.
**24**This is the day that the Lord has made;
    let us rejoice and be glad in it.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+118%3A1-2%2C+14-24&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-15894a)

Lord of mystery and marvels, you have walked with us on this Lenten journey. You have seen how we have responded to those whom Jesus encountered along the path. We have heard their stories and have seen their pain. We have witnessed the love that Jesus offered to them and the miracles that have taken place in their lives. Now we gather on this brilliant day in a place filled with candles and flowers, where the music soars and the spirits of all are lifted in joy. Be with us again, reminding us that the journey to the cross does not end in death, but becomes a road of joy. Lift our hearts and our spirits to sing your praises in gratitude for all that you have done for us. Let the light of Jesus Christ shine on us, in us, and through us as witness to your eternal presence and love for us; for we ask this in his name. AMEN.