

“This is the day that the Lord has made,
let us rejoice and be glad in it!” AMEN!

Those in the know, know how Pastor Tom loves
to insert secular songs into his sermons.

And since this is the big day, right?

The Sunday of Sundays,
the song at the start is “Big Time.”

“Big Time... I’m on my way I’m making it.
(Big Time) I’ve got to make it show, yeah!

So much larger than life.”

Today is the “Big Time” for the Christian faith.

I mean, this could be the song coming
from Jesus’ mouth as he walked out of that grave.

“So much larger than life!” :-)

There’s a line that even says:

“The place where [he] came from
was a small town,” perfect, right! :-)

Well, maybe!

The lyrics I sang are about the only ones that connect the song to the resurrection. :-)

Easter Sunday is BIG!

Alleluia, Christ is risen!
(Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!”)

It is a privilege and a challenge to proclaim the good news of Christ’s resurrection, the foundation of Christian hope.

To communicate: A day vibrating with the buzz of new life!

Matthew’s gospel invites us into the day with his re-telling of the account.

And one of the things unique to Matthew is the occurrence of the earthquakes.

The first one at Jesus’ death, when the centurion keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and chaos but still confessed:

Truly this man was God’s Son.
The second earthquake, reported in Matthew, came on that first Easter when

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary
went to the tomb.

Earthquakes bookend the crucifixion and
the resurrection.

They bring attention to the seismic *and*
cosmic events that had occurred.

In that moment, everything changed,
but then (as usual) we forget. (Pause)

I grew up in California and have been
through a few earthquakes.

Thankfully, they were just scary
the earthquakes and not deadly ones.

The last really destructive one in
the San Francisco Bay Area was when I was
here at FSU for college in 1989.

That one was scary and deadly.

Earthquakes have shook the area
almost everyday this week.

Even the small earthquakes
rattle your psychology.

Just one reminds you that the ground is
not as secure as you might think.

That the earth itself is alive and unpredictable,

Especially in these times when
the whole earth is in trauma -
what does it mean when nature itself
draws creation to tragic moments? Hm

So, back to Matthew,
Mary and Mary are at the foot of the cross
when the first earthquake hits and
now they are at the tomb when
the second one comes.

They feared survival without Jesus,
feared retribution from the authorities
for being Jesus followers, and they
feared the very ground beneath their feet.

They went to the tomb amidst so much fear.

Now, fear can cause people
to do irrational things, but these women
did courageous things.

It's notable, don't you think,

that in all of the resurrection accounts it's
always the women who "get" Jesus first.

I'm not saying they weren't afraid,
but the fear didn't keep them away.

I believe that their bravery, recognized here,
has to do with life... and the tremors of
creation inherent in women.

We believe it to be the kind of groaning
in labor pains that Paul talks about in Romans.

That we, ourselves groan in labor pains
while we wait for adoption.

That is the redemption of our bodies. (Pause)

You see, we don't really know how to live
until we consider deeply the reality of death.

And when we go to the tomb
we are doing a courageous thing.

Fear might be strong, but our Christian faith
has something to say to the question of
what happens after death?

Our faith says there is joy, unification, and wholeness.

I've come to appreciate people who aren't afraid to talk about their encounters with mortality.

On "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," he'll ask various celebrities questions like "What's your favorite sandwich?

Favorite action movie? Prefer dogs or cats?"

Stephen Colbert is a practicing Catholic and he's been known to ask more grounding questions like this one:

"What do you think will happen when we die?"

You can imagine the wide range of answers he gets.

Reincarnation, food for soil, long sleep.

George Clooney (who was raised Catholic, but left the faith) said "as he gets older he starts to renegotiate things a little.

And is beginning to think well, maybe there is something that happens after death."

Michelle Obama, when asked the big question, immediately said,

“We go to heaven.”

Rock star Bono, also a Christian, said,
“We are born. I actually believe that’s when
we are born, when we begin.
These are labor pains, Stephen.”*

Easter reminds us, you and me, that
we don’t need to shy away from our mortality.

That truth was reminded unto us on
Ash Wednesday when ashes were smeared on
our foreheads and we were told

“Remember that you are dust, and
to dust you shall return.”

It’s a pretty stark reminder that one day,
hopefully a long time from now, but
there’s no avoiding it, the one day will come
and there will be a tomb.

“These are the labor pains.”
Quaking body; quaking earth. (Pause)

So today, on the Big Day,
(Sing) “I’m on my way I’m making it.”

We learn what it is like to be human.

To live and love as if today was all we had.

To linger in the dark for awhile, even on Easter
(especially on Easter) we can call a thing what it is.

To be aware of coming to the tomb, and
know it's ok to be a little sad, or afraid,
and be courageous!

In other words, this Easter, let us
be like the women who go to the tomb and
return saying "I have seen the Lord!"

Big Time! Oh, yeah...

AMEN!

*Commentary by Greg Carey: When Joy and fear Hold
Hands.