

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10

1 Col. 11:23-26

“Lord loosen our bonds, and  
reveal yourself to us.  
Help us know resurrection.” AMEN!

Easter brings out some of the church’s  
most triumphant music and imagery.

The organ vibrates energy,  
voices stir hearts in song,  
the scent of lilies tickles our noses, and  
the victory over death is proclaimed.

Matthew’s gospel has a unique way  
of presenting what happened when Jesus  
was raised.

In the account of the resurrection read today,  
we find accord with the triumphant imagery.

A triumph that belongs to God,  
comes from God, is controlled by God; a  
begs us for response.

How will we react to such displays of power?

“Earthquaking,” soul shaking, power.

A power which causes soldiers to collapse  
and become like dead men.

A power which rolls a stone away.

And in that power, a message that's given  
to the women disciples to deliver to  
the men disciples.

A message from an angel, that we are told,  
who sits on the stone that was placed  
to keep Jesus's body entombed.

The angel makes a chair out of the stone,  
mocking its great weight.

All this, except for the women being  
the first to receive the news that Jesus is raised,  
is unique to Matthew. (Pause)

So let's take the earthquaking first.

Are we able to relate to the seismic event?

Are we able to relate to the  
uncertainty of what occurred?

Perhaps the best way to do that would be  
to think about what it's like to be in an earthquake.

During earthquakes nothing is stable nor secure.

Everything rattles, dishes jump out of  
cabinets as everything totters on the edge.

If you've ever been in an earthquake  
then you know the way  
it makes you stop.

There's a reaction to want to run outside or  
seek shelter under a table.

You're overwhelmed as  
the natural world itself  
is affected. (Pause)

In Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake,  
Darlene Etienne, a 16 year old choir girl  
was buried in the rubble for 15 days.

During those two full weeks after  
the quake hit Port-au-Prince,

rescuer's hope in finding survivors shrank.

Still, they kept searching, and then they heard  
the signs of life and uncovered Darlene  
beneath the ruins of her cousins home.

What makes this story moving  
is not only that she survived because  
usually people cannot endure that  
long without water and shelter,

but also miraculous was that people refused  
to stop looking for her, and that persistence  
gave her a chance.

Earthquakes bring great fear and in some cases,  
like Darlene's and the women at the tomb,  
extreme joy. (Pause)

The guarding soldiers witness the angel  
descending and they shook in fear and  
became like dead men.

One might be reminded with this account  
that even armed guards can be overwhelmed.

Reminded that the power of military might  
is like a harmless bug compared  
to the power of God and

to become uplifted to know that  
the heavy stone meant to keep Jesus entombed  
is no more of a blockage than flimsy  
yellow crime scene tape. (Pause)

And with a quaking it's revealed  
that God cares nothing about the repercussions  
of breaking open the threshold between  
tomb and life.

But, Jesus is no longer there.

He's already left the grave.

The ever present invitation to look vibrates  
in our ears to hear the way the angel invites  
the women to see where he once lay.

It vibrates in our ears because we too know  
what it's like to be stunned by the death of  
a loved one.

We too can relate to wanting to go  
to the tomb like these women did,  
just to be there.

Do we go expecting resurrection?

They didn't, but still they went, like us,  
out of love, they went, searched and  
looked and shook.

“So they left the tomb quickly with fear and

great joy.” (Pause)

Easter, in its triumph of victory and imagery,  
is God’s victory over the grave....

It is not teaching us how to die, but the way to live.

I’d imagine, everyone is here  
for a variety of reasons, but Easter calls out  
the endless assurance about  
God’s determination to boot death  
out of the world.

You’ve been blindsided and robbed by death.

Live long enough and it will happen if it hasn’t, yet.

And as commentator Matt Skinner writes,  
“[all of] human history - past and present -  
brims with people and movements who  
know how to use death  
to advance terrible [agendas and]  
ends.”

And the women know, those armed guards  
are gonna wake up and Rome never runs out  
of crosses to execute people. (Pause)

So, the women make haste to depart

after viewing the empty tomb.

There's still lingering danger, but there's something else more important.

There's renewed determination to share the news that Jesus Lives.

Then notice the order.

On their way to deliver the message of life and mercy, the women encounter Jesus.

Still experiencing fear and great joy, Jesus greets them, affirms the message from the angel,

to tell the others to go to Galilee; there they will see me.

Galilee, was where Jesus' ministry began and where the Matthew account concludes.

Galilee was a region within Israel that was controlled by the Romans and ruled by Herod Antipas.

It had bustling urban centers and small villages holding both

Jewish and Gentile people.

It's no small thing that Jesus told them  
to go there to see him. (Pause)

Let this be our reaction to Jesus Lives.

We too are called to urban centers and  
to rural places to encounter Jesus.

Though we understand the implications of empire  
and imperialistic authority,  
we will not fear them.

We reject alliances with despots who deliver death.

In their minds, nothing silences like death  
and the threat of it, but it didn't work then  
and it won't work today.

For we are rooted in resurrection, and  
won't allow the dead to remain silent  
and stay forgotten.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

AMEN!