

## **Sermon For Easter Sunday April 5 2026**

### **Easter: Easter as an Earthquake Matthew 28:1-10**

“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.” (Matthew 28:2)

John says that they got to the tomb on Easter morning, and it’s empty. Then, they go back home.

Go back home? Reminds you of the two disciples in Luke on the way to Emmaus. “Some women told us that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but we had already planned to have supper over in Emmaus, so we couldn’t change our reservations.”

A man is raised from the dead and you can’t cancel lunch? How dumb are these disciples?

The disciples were the sort of people who could see an empty tomb and not let it spoil lunch. You don’t get an idea like the bodily resurrection of Jesus out of people with brains like Simon Peter’s.

In short, the disciples were people like us.

People like us are the sort or folk who like to believe that you can have resurrection and still have the world as it was yesterday. We want to have Easter and still have our world un-rocked by resurrection. We are amazingly well adjusted to the same old world.

I think that’s why Matthew says that when there was Easter, the whole earth shook. Luke does Easter as a meal on Sunday evening with the Risen Christ. John has resurrected Jesus encounter Mary Magdalene in the garden. But Matthew? Easter is an earthquake with doors shaken off tombs and dead

people walking the streets, the stone rolled away by the ruckus and an imprudent angel sitting on it.

Matthew says Easter is an earthquake that shook the whole world.

We modern types try to “explain” the resurrection. You can’t “explain” a resurrection. Resurrection explains us. The truth of Jesus tells on the faces of the befuddled disciples who witnessed it. Not one of them expected, wanted Easter. Death, defeat, while regrettable, are utterly explainable.

“It was a good campaign while it lasted. But we didn’t get Him elected Messiah. Death has the last word. We had hoped, but you’ve got to face facts. You want some lunch?”

The world is in the tight death-grip of the “facts.” All that lives, dies. The good get it in the end. Face facts. It may be a rather somber world, but it is our world where things stay tied down and what dies stays that way. And there are few surprises. This is us.

But Easter is about God. It is not about the resuscitation of a dead body. That’s resuscitation, not resurrection. It’s not about the “immortality of the soul,” some divine spark that endures after the end. That’s Plato, not Jesus. It’s about God; not God as an empathetic but ineffective good friend, or some inner experience, but God who creates a way when there was no way, a God who makes war on evil until evil is undone, a God who raises dead Jesus just to show us who’s in charge here.

I don’t know this for sure, but I think that Easter earthquake angel perched on the rock rolled from the tomb was the same angel who, back in Matthew 1 (Matthew 1:8-25) shook Joseph awake one night with the news that his fiancée was pregnant. (Talk about an earthquake!) See my point? God did on Easter in invading the tomb what God did on Christmas in a virgin’s womb. Made a way when there was no way. Took charge. The same angel who was sent to tell Joseph, “Name the baby, Emmanuel, God with us,” was the angel who told the women, “Don’t be afraid. He isn’t here. He’s been raised.” Little God with us

grew up, got crucified, made the earth shake, and is on the move to take back the world.

On the cross, the world did all it could to Jesus. At Easter, God did all God could to the world. And the earth shook.

You don't explain that. You witness it. That's why the Risen Christ appeared first to His own disciples. They had heard Him teach, seen Him heal, watched as He loved the poor and attacked the rich, watched Him be arrested by the soldiers, tried by the judge, and crucified.

Why would Jesus come back first to His disciples? Because they were the ones able to recognize that this Risen Lord was none other than the crucified Jesus. Crucifixion wasn't just an unfortunate mistake in the Roman legal system. Crucifixion was the inevitable, predictable result of saying the things Jesus said, and doing the things Jesus did, and being the Savior Jesus was. This is what the world always does to people who threaten the world. Face facts. But on Easter, God inserted a new fact. God took the cruel cross and made it the means of triumph. God (the same Creator who made light from darkness, a world from void) took the worst we could do, all our death-dealing doings, and led them out toward life. And the earth shook.

A new world was thereby offered to us. Jesus came back to forgive the very disciples who had forsaken Him. The world is about forgiveness, as it turns out, not vengeance. And the earth shook.

Jesus picked up a piece of bread and ate it and you could see the nail prints in His hands. The world is about life, as it turns out, not death. And the earth shook.

When the stone was rolled away, and the earth shook, we got our first glimpse of a new world, a world where death doesn't have the last word, a world where injustice is made right, and innocent suffering is vindicated by the intrusion of a powerful God.

The women came out to the cemetery to write one more chapter in the long sad story of death's ascendancy, one more episode of how the good always get it in

the end. This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper of resignation at death's dark victory.

And then — the earth heaved, an angel appeared, the stone was rolled away, Caesar's soldiers shook. The angel plopped himself down on the stone in one final act of impudent defiance of death, and the soldiers and all that, and said to the women, "Don't be afraid. You're looking for Jesus? He isn't here."

Then that angel turned to the soldiers and said, "Be afraid. Everything your world is built on is being shaken."

Nobody went back the same way they came.