

“Jesus is Risen”
By Rev. Frances Savill
April 20, 2025
Easter Sunday

Readings:

Matthew 28:1-10

There are two things that are certain- death and taxes.

But death is not the certainly it was before the first Easter.

Jesus of Nazareth, who had been dead as a doornail on Friday afternoon, was not in his tomb that Easter morning, and the world – then and now- was turned upside down.

The call to worship on that first Easter was not a cheery “Good Morning!” but a shattering earthquake that rippled a seismic shock through history and signaled that the fault lines of human history had shifted dramatically toward grace and hope.

A blazingly brilliant angel descended from heaven to appear at the tomb, effortlessly rolling back the heavy stone and sitting on it.

The earthquake is a drum roll signaling a dramatic act of divine power; and the act of

sitting down on the stone is a display of divine strength and authority, as if to say, “Well, so much for that!”

Matthew can’t resist making a small joke at the guards’ expense.

They became “like dead men” with fear at the angels appearing.

They were on cemetery detail, of course, to guard a dead man who was supposed to stay that way, but when their charge turns out to have become suddenly very much alive, it is they who become candidates for the grave.

The women had come to the tomb to mourn, to be near to Jesus even in his death, to give the last service to him that they could, to prepare the body, since there hadn’t been time on Friday.

What they found was God’s answer after his apparent silence on Good Friday.

God has the last word, after Jesus’ questions on the cross “My God why have you forsaken me?” God had the last word after the disciples’ cries as they tried to make sense of Jesus’ death, after mocking words of the crowd, the scornful questions of the religious leaders, and the ridicule of the Romans.

God raised Jesus from death to life.
But this was not just a saving of one.
What God was doing was starting something
new, beginning the new world promised long
ago.

That Jesus was raised from the dead means that
the world is changed forever.

Jesus' resurrection announces, not as a theory
but as a fact, that God's kingdom has come.

It announces that the son of man had been
vindicated after his suffering, and that there was
dawning not just another day, another week in
the history of Israel and the world, but the start of
God's new age that will continue until the
nations have been brought into the kingdom.

"The order of things is changed: the Tomb
devours death and not the dead; the house of
death becomes the mansion of life."

(Chrysologus, C.A., 977)

The women were invited by the angel to come
and see for themselves.

They were invited to look into the tomb and see
where Jesus' body had laid in death.

They were invited to see for themselves that the
tomb was indeed empty that Jesus was not

there, and then to believe in faith that God had raised him from the dead just as he said he would.

The women didn't receive this message just for their own comfort, and the secret assurance of their own hearts.

But they received the great glad news so that they could tell first the other disciples, and then the world.

They were the apostles to the apostles – the first and consistent witnesses of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

Then the angel said to them; "And look! He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there! Look, I've told you!"

The resurrection message says not only that Jesus has been snatched from the world of the dead; it also says that he is preparing an important meeting with the living.

The angel's message included a *past* event ("Jesus *has* been raised"), a *present* event ("Jesus *is* going on ahead of you"), and a *future* event ("and you *will* see him there").

Jesus is he one "who is and who was and who is to come." (Rev. 1:4)

This historical message to the first disciples comes close to being a summary of the Christian mystery: Jesus is risen, Jesus is preparing to meet you now (in the fellowship of the church), and Jesus will be seen (when he comes again in glory).

These are the words that meet us this morning. Jesus is risen, Jesus is preparing to meet you now, and you will see him when he comes again in glory.

The women left the grave quickly, with fear and great joy, running to tell the other disciples. And look! Jesus met them and said, “Greetings” Really, the effect of Jesus’ words were “hello, or hi”

“Hi” is no great message from the other side, but it is so human that it almost tells us enough; it tells us that after the resurrection Jesus may be much more, but he is nothing less, than the real human being he was before his death.

It tells us that Jesus is still Jesus.

He is still the earthy man he was, a friend of sinners, someone we’d invite to have dinner with us and he’d be glad to come to our table.

The women grabbed Jesus’ feet and worshipped him.

In this one sentence we see the two natures of Jesus.

They grabbed his feet – he is human, he has a body, he is alive, raised in bodily form.

But the women also worshipped him, and Jesus doesn't reject their worship.

Jesus is true man and true God.

Jesus words meet us, as they met the women;
“Don't be afraid.”

These are not just words of assurance and comfort, but a command that as Jesus' disciples, as those who witness to him we are not to be afraid.

Jesus is present with us.

Jesus meets us on the path.

Jesus has conquered death and reigns as the Lord of life.

Do not be afraid.

To the women he said; “ Don't be afraid. Go and tell... tell my brothers...”

The angel had told the women to go tell the “disciples”, but Jesus calls them “brothers.”

In that one word, with that one change from the angels message, we hear all the warmth and forgiveness of the new testament crammed in.

Jesus could have called his disciples a lot of names at that point, but he chose the word “brothers.”

They are forgiven, they are restored to relationship with Jesus.

Jesus message, the meaning of his resurrection is victory over death and it is also the forgiveness.

Jesus meets the women so that he can personally send them on their mission to go and tell.

When Jesus comes to people, it is never just for their comfort, Jesus comes, forgives, heals, comforts, gives hope, and then sends us out to witness, to share all that we have seen and heard, and experienced.

This Easter Day we hear the glorious good news that has changed the world forever.

But how will it make a difference to the world if we do not share the news and live the meaning of it day by day by day?

Matthew’s gospel doesn’t end with the empty tomb, but with the women being told to go and

tell the other disciples, Jesus' forgiven disciples,
that Jesus is alive.

And when Jesus appeared to the disciples he
sent them out to share the good news with the
world.

That mission is now ours.

Thanks be to God!