

St. Columba's Episcopal Church  
Easter Sunday – April 9, 2023  
Matthew 28:1-10  
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” had watched as Jesus was crucified on Friday. They were there that evening when Joseph of Arimathea put the body of Jesus in his tomb hewn in a rock and then “rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb.” Saturday was the Sabbath, and these Jewish women observed the Sabbath at home. At dawn the next day, the first day of the week – their first opportunity to journey from home – they went to see the tomb of Jesus. In grief and in love, they simply wanted to be near the body of their Lord.

Then all heaven broke loose! There was a great earthquake. An angel who looked like lightning rolled back the stone in front of Jesus' tomb. Noise and shifting earth and flashing light! The strong soldiers ordered by Pilate to guard the tomb so that no one might steal Jesus' body were terrified. The two women were at attention, ready to hear God's mighty announcement the angel had come to declare: Jesus who was crucified is not here, for he has been raised! God had indeed acted as Jesus said God would. Death and hell have not had the last word. Their word was on Friday. God and heaven have had the last word this Easter morning.

God sent the angel with news of Christ's resurrection, and the angel sent the women to spread the wonderful news, first to the men who had followed Jesus. They were instructed to tell the men that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that the risen Lord would meet them in Galilee. They would see Jesus not in Jerusalem where he had died, but in Galilee where he had lived and ministered – feeding the hungry, healing the sick, forgiving sinners, teaching anyone who would listen about God's kingdom, showing people God's love in action.

The women ran to deliver the angel's message, with joy and in awe of the astonishing news of Christ's resurrection. As they hastened to do God's bidding, “suddenly Jesus met them and said ‘Greetings!’” Jesus,

unmistakably Jesus. The women knew him immediately – the man who had been their Teacher, the man who was crucified, the man they loved. The same man, yes, but also changed. When they met the risen Lord, the women saw who he truly was, and they “took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.”

Wouldn't it have been wonderful to be with those women on the first Easter morning? Wouldn't it have been wonderful to see the risen Lord, to have been able to kneel before him and worship him? Wouldn't it have been wonderful to know him with absolute certainty – Jesus, the Christ, risen from the dead, gloriously alive, announcing his promise to meet his disciples in Galilee? Wouldn't it have been wonderful to hear the words “Do not be afraid” in a voice they knew and loved so well? Wouldn't it have been wonderful to live the rest of your life with such memories?

On our earthly journeys we cannot see and hear Jesus as these disciples did. But we may look for signs of resurrection even now. Where? In the words of Rufus M. Jones, the Quaker religious leader born in 1863 in South China, Maine: “Wherever we see life conquering death, wherever the white tents of love are pitched against the black tents of hate, wherever the living forces of goodness are battering down the strongholds of evil, wherever the sinner is being changed to a saint” (from the book, “The Inner Life”). We can see resurrection going on now, and we believe that it will go on until God's kingdom is established forever.

So, the question for us on this glorious day is this: will we join in the holy process of resurrection, for the love of our risen Lord? Will we hear the Lord's words – “do not be afraid” – and bravely make resurrection known in and through our lives? Mary Magdalene and the other Mary listened to the angel of the Lord and ran to take the angel's message to Jesus' disciples. On their way they met Jesus. Christ is alive, and if we go where God sends us and do what God asks us to do, he will greet us on the way – here or hereafter – and our joy will be complete.

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