

He is not here, for He has Risen

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Easter Sunday) is Matthew 28:1-10. This is the account of Jesus' resurrection from his death.

This account features a couple of ladies, an angel and Jesus himself. Mary Magdalene was from the village of Magdala. Mary was present at the crucifixion, witnessed Jesus' burial, and helped anoint His body. Mary became a devoted follower of Jesus after He cast seven demons out of her (Mk. 16:9; Luke 8:1-2). She was not a prostitute as some critics of Christianity have suggested in recent years. The other Mary was the wife of Clopas and sister of the mother of Jesus. Nothing much is known about the angel.

The whole narrative is filled with raw power and incredible comfort. The earthquake that accompanied the angel's descent recalls the prophecy of Haggai 2:6-9. *"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty, And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."* It seems significant that an earthquake marked both Jesus' death and His resurrection. These quakes were obviously more than coincidences of nature: both quakes signaled that great and mighty acts of God were taking place. It is as though the Father was tying the crucifixion and the resurrection of His Son together with a seismic knot.

It was a fearful vision to the superstitious soldiers to gaze upon one of the holy angels of God. It overwhelmed them; they fell over in a faint, and became as dead men. When God wants to carry out His will with regard to the salvation of mankind, no sinful man, no enemy, may resist Him. The resurrection of Jesus was the seal and final proof for the full atonement gained for the whole world, and all the efforts of the Jews and of Satan to hinder it were unavailing.

The message from the angel was *"Do not be afraid."* This was the same greeting Gabriel gave to Zechariah (Luke 1:13) and to Mary (Luke 1:30). When the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:20) and when the angel appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:10), the greeting was the same. Jesus repeats that refrain when the women come upon him. It is still the message we get from the Lord through his word.

Both the angel and Jesus urge to women to go and tell the disciples in Galilee where Jesus is going before them and will appear to the disciples. The forceful event of Easter is too immense to just let go, but as Easter people we can shout it from the rooftops.

Prayer: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen. (TLSB)