

Friday of Easter – Matthew 28:1-10

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

This Easter passage has always attracted me. The angel is just such a typical guy in this scene. He comes amid an earthquake. Rolls the huge stone away and sits on it. I can see him smugly perched up there, glowing in the early morning gloom, with a big smile upon his face. The guards are so terrified they faint like dead men. The angel turns to the women and says, “Don’t be afraid.” He announces the resurrection and gives them marching orders and ends it with, “See, I have told you.” I imagine him waving them off to their task at this point.

The angel apparently does not have a lot of experience with sinful people. The women depart quickly. I would have too! But they have not kept the whole of the command. It says they leave to tell the disciples with fear and great joy. The angel had told them not to be afraid and here they are still afraid. Thank goodness, Jesus understands us. He is a real human being. He knows that, unlike angels, we are often captive to our emotions. Simply telling me not to be afraid is not enough. He seeks the women out and greets them. They touch and Jesus smiles upon them. His commands are the same as the angel’s had been in content but how different they are. While they are in physical contact with one another he says, “Do not fear. Tell my brothers...” This is what these fearful women need. Jesus speaks of brothers and stands close to them.

Jesus knows what makes you afraid today and he knows how much fear can control your life. Jesus knows that some angelic command or even an admonition from a devotional “Don’t be afraid” will not take away your fear. He has risen from the dead because he understands that his sheep need a shepherd and you need him to comfort and calm you. Hold the hand of someone you love today and reassure them that Jesus lives and loves us today. You both probably need to hear that.

God be with you until we meet again. In Jesus’ love and mercy, Pastor Wulf