

He is Not Here, but Risen (28:1-10)

~~Y'all can have a seat.~~ Matthew 28, starting in v. 1:

[1] After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (that is, two of Jesus' female disciples) went to look at the tomb (that is, the tomb of Jesus, after he had been crucified and set inside of it). [2] There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

Which, I'm not gonna lie: I low-key love this move from the angel. If you're going to move a stone away from a grave with superhuman strength, the absolute best thing to do next is to sit on top of it, arms crossed, and mean-mug at everybody who walks by. I'm not sure if that's exactly what the angel did...but it's 100% what I would do. Verse 3:

[3] His appearance (the angel's) was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. [4] The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

So for us to know, angels in the bible were much less cute and adorable and more strange and terrifying—to the point that evidently, even Roman military guards start shaking in their boots when they see an angel. It's no coincidence that nearly every time an angel of God shows up in the narrative of the bible, one of the first things they say to the people that see them, is “do not be afraid.” Which is angel for okay—don't freak out... So I'm not saying that the airbrushed painting of angels in your grandparents' house is wrong...I'm just saying it's not right.

Anywho—these two female disciples head to the tomb of Jesus, and then this happens, v. 5:

[5] The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. [6] He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

(I'm gonna read that part again because I'm not sure y'all heard it. “He is not here,” the angel said. “He has risen (as in, from the dead), just as he said.” Sounds like somewhat of a big deal. Second half of v. 6:

Come and see the place where he lay (so it's not completely clear in this translation, but in the original language, that's past tense: “come and see the place where he was laying—you know, because his body is no longer lying there).

The **angel continues**—v. 7:

[7] Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." [8] So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

I love **how it describes** their emotional state here: “afraid,” yet “filled with joy.” Don’t know if you’ve ever felt those two emotions simultaneously before—although I would imagine if you saw a resurrection you might. *Afraid, yet filled with joy*—what a great, bizarre combination of feelings to experience together.

So these **two women hurry away** to go tell the rest of the disciples the news from the angel. But as they do that, *this* happens—v. 9:

[9] Suddenly Jesus (as in, formerly *dead* Jesus) **met them. “Greetings,” he said** (most understated entrance ever: *Greetings*). **They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. [10] Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”**

So a group of women receive the news from an angel that Jesus has risen from the dead. And then, **just in case they were skeptical** about that news, Jesus shows up and confirms it. He is not in the tomb; he is *risen*. And now they know it for sure. / What an incredible way to spend a Sunday morning. **Brunch has *nothing* on *this* (and believe me: I love me some brunch).**

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The resurrection of Jesus is one of the most spectacular, most moving, most powerful stories to ever be told. And what’s more, it’s a *true* story. We’re actually going to talk *next* Sunday, in detail, about how we can know that it’s true. But this morning, all I want to do is spend some time *marveling* in it together. **Because as terrifying and exciting as that news was to these women the very first Easter morning, I would argue it’s just as terrifying and exciting to us, sitting here today.** Allow me to explain.

First, the resurrection of Jesus is, in a way, **terrifying**. It’s terrifying because **it means that all the stories we’ve gotten very used to telling ourselves about our life aren’t actually true.** Or bare minimum, they won’t *always* be true. **It’s not true that this life is all there is. It’s not true that we are measured by our successes, and defined by our failures. It’s not true that eating and drinking and pleasure and fleeting happiness is as**

good as life can get. It's not true that our only hope is "seizing the day" and "making the most of this moment." **The true story of the world is so much better than any Disney plotline, Hallmark card, or motivational poster will tell you that it is.** Because the resurrection of Jesus changes the very fabric of the world as we know it. There's something beyond *all* of those things. And it all got set into motion on the very first Easter morning. And if you've gotten used to those *old* stories about the world, the resurrection is in a way, *terrifying*. It pulls the very rug out from underneath *all* of that.

But the resurrection is **also, unbelievably exciting**. It's *exciting* because it means that life on planet Earth is decidedly more *hopeful* than we've been told. It means that death *isn't* in the end. It means that cancer and disease and heart attacks and dementia and miscarriages—that *none* of those things, as tragic as they *are*, get to have the final word anymore. Not in the new world God has created. *Their* days are numbered. Those things are absolutely heartbreaking. They are *terrible*—but they do not get to *win anymore*. The resurrection of Jesus means that death itself one day will cease to exist. As the prophet Isaiah once said, "[God] will swallow up *death* forever." He will "...wipe away the tears from all faces."¹ He will make all the sad things come untrue—and we *know* that, because on the first Easter morning, God began the process.

The resurrection is terrifying and exciting. **Terrifying, because it means all the stories we tend to live by aren't true. Exciting, because the truth is far, far better. //**

So for the rest of our time this morning, you're going to **hear from seven people** in our church family who have come to believe that *new, better* story about the world. People who have realized that the old stories they lived by weren't actually true, and that the *true* story is far better. You're going to get to hear them, on video, describe the moments where they came to *realize* all of that. And then, after you hear them explain that, you're going to watch them get into the water in front of me...and get baptized.

Now, **I can fully appreciate** that if you're new to the whole church thing, **baptism can be an odd thing to witness**. Upon first glance, it might look like we're temporarily drowning someone on purpose. You'll be happy to know that's not exactly what it is. *Baptism* is a symbol God left his people to act out, visually, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When a person goes under the water, they're acting out the *death* and *burial* of Jesus. They're going under the *water*, just like Jesus went down to the grave in death. But then they're going to come back *out* of the water, symbolizing Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

¹ See Isaiah 25:8

And in a way, by doing all of this, they're demonstrating their own type of death, burial and resurrection. They're saying that the old version of them—the version of them that believed the *old* stories about the world—that *that* person is now *dead*. And that the *new* version of them is alive. The *new* person who lives out of the new story made possible by Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

And because *that is what we're celebrating* this morning, we like to make a pretty *big* deal out of it. So when each and every person comes out of that water, we are going to lose our minds a little. **We're not going to golf clap; we're going to for real clap.** We're going to yell and whistle and be as loud as we possibly can be. Because what we are celebrating this morning is more deserving, and more worthy, and more significant than anything else we would clap or yell about in the world. So this morning, you all have my pastoral permission to lose your minds a little. Sound good?

Love it. Let's hear some people's stories.