

The Resurrection of Our Lord, April 12, 2020

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He Has Risen!

Matthew 28:1–10

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

To call the resurrection of Jesus unexpected is an understatement. It was way more than that—it was unthought-of, impossible, beyond the wildest imaginations of the women and the disciples. It couldn't happen. But it did happen.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb (v 1). They expected to find the body. They wanted to finish the anointing so hastily begun on Friday evening. What they found instead surprised them.

They found an angel of the Lord. **His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow** (v 3). Matthew tells us that **there was a great earthquake**, and the angel **descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it** (v 2). **The guards, meanwhile, trembled and became like dead men** (v 4).

Angels strike fear into the hearts of God's enemies, but they bring great joy and comfort for God's people. Angels appear in connection with major events—at the announcement that Mary would have a Son, God in human flesh; at Jesus' birth in Bethlehem; then they minister to Him during His temptation and again in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And the angel at the tomb: **“Don't be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead, and behold, He's going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. See, I have told you”** (vv 5–7).

On the way, **Jesus met them and said, “Greetings! Rejoice!”** (v 9). The women saw the Lord. Not a vision or a dream or a hallucination, but the Lord Himself, alive, flesh-and-blood alive, resurrected body alive. Unexpectedly alive.

They were used to a world, this world, in which death had the last word. The dead remained dead and that was that. Sorrow was a normal part of life—parents died, and so did friends and neighbors and sometimes even babies. The number of the dead never got smaller; it only got bigger. Regular life also included sickness, disability, poverty,

loneliness, broken families, not to mention everyday aches and pains. It included floods, famines, earthquakes, and wars, and pestilence. It included depression, addiction, mental illness, and unemployment. I'm sure this list could be multiplied many times over with examples from your lives and the lives of those you love. Normal was a fallen world, bodies of death, a groaning creation.

But this normal is abnormal. We see the world only as it is now, not as it was, not yet as it will be. After all, it is God's world. By His Word He created it. He took great care and deliberation with it. He gave it order and harmony. He set it all in motion: celestial bodies, plants, animals, man as the crown. The whole of it was His delight and joy.

Until sin. Through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, "and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). That's why we think of this as normal, this sin, this death, and all the rest of it. It spread from Adam to us, from Eden to Central Massachusetts, like a genetic disorder or a communicable disease. This infection has colored the way we see the world. It's ruined not only our lives but also our relationship with God. We don't even know that we should expect something different.

But we should. And here's why: because God refused to give up His creation; because God refused to let sin, death and devil keep what they'd ruined. Again and again He does the unexpected, the impossible: He brings life out of death. From first to last, Scripture is the story of God destroying death and doing life—the Flood, the Exodus, the promises of new creation, Daniel in the lion's den, and his three friends in the fiery furnace. Each of these—hint, an anticipation, a foretaste of the resurrection to come.

And now the great unexpected has happened. The tomb is empty. The women have seen the Lord. Christ is risen from dead—creation freed from bondage, sin forgiven, death destroyed, the devil defeated. New life present in the resurrected body of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Life for all the world.

This new life, this resurrection, is spread in the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit. It's transferred through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It remakes you from the inside out so that you also are a new creation in Christ. The world isn't yet what it will be, but what it will be is seen already in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus rose from the dead, and the world has never been the same, and you will never be the same. Resurrection—it's the new normal. You can expect it.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
