

Sermon: “Do Not Be Afraid; Hurry and Tell”

Text: Matthew 28:1-10

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Matthew 28:1-10 (ESV) ¹ 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.”

Introduction: There had been fear when Jesus came to earth. Angels had to tell the shepherds to stop being afraid. They had said to the shepherds: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people (**Luke 2:10 ESV**). Now again, after Jesus has resurrected, an angel has to reassure Mary Magdalene and the other Mary that they should not be afraid.

Have you ever been in an earthquake? I have, not a bad one, but bad enough. There are a lot of earthquakes everyday. On average, Magnitude 2 and smaller earthquakes occur several hundred times a day world-wide. Major earthquakes, greater than magnitude 7, happen more than once per month. "Great earthquakes", magnitude 8 and higher, occur about once a year. *Illus.* I was in an earthquake while I was at Lincoln Christian College in the late 60's. I was in the library (rare occasion, what are the odds?). Explain.

Early in my ministry in Beaver, PA there were some earthquakes that ravaged parts of the Middle East killing tens of thousands. There was a tsunami that killed more than one hundred thousand people. Why are earthquakes, even small ones, so terrifying? They are traumatic because a person has little or no control over his personal safety. There literally is no place to hide. But those are natural disasters. What do you do when you are forced to deal with life and death issues?

What do you do when you are confronted by God?

No one likes to lose control. Most of our lives are built around becoming independent (from about two-years old on). When there is a threat to our independence - it brings fear. Old age might trigger for some - similar feelings. One of the hardest things to do in life is TRUST. Trusting God means *He* is in control.

The first thing we should hear from the resurrection story and apply to our lives is the advice of angels:

I. Do Not Be Afraid.

A. The response of the guards (v. 4) was fear.

This was the kind of fear that paralyzes movement. Faces were frozen with fear. They appeared to be dead. **Verse 5** brings the words of encouragement - literally, “stop being afraid.”

The Scripture says they shook, but this was not the result of aftershocks, but the tremors that came from deep within their souls. They knew this was no ordinary event. Physically they became as dead men. This was a typical response to a visit from God (theophany).

Earthquakes were a sign of the end-times and God’s judgment.

Revelation 8:1-5 (ESV) ¹ When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (Earthquakes can be a sign of God’s presence)

This first Easter sunrise marked not the End, but a New Day and a New Beginning.

Revelation 21:5-8 (ESV) ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Revelation 21:8 lists eight categories of those who will *not* inherit heaven. First on the list are not the unbelievers or murderers, as you might expect, but the cowardly (fearful - KJV). It is that fear which makes some to become Judases to the Savior or even betray their own family on earth. In fear Adam betrayed his wife, Eve, and falsely accused her before God. When Henry VI said, “Of all base passions, fear is the most accursed,” he expressed a Christian thought.

I John 4:16-18 (ESV) ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

Some earthquakes are good. During the time Jesus was dying there was an earthquake during which the temple veil (the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies) was torn from top to bottom. This happened as a sign to show that Christianity had replaced Judaism as the appropriate way to understand and worship God. Jesus becomes our High Priest. Now God is accessible to everyone through Jesus by virtue of his perfect sacrifice on the cross. During this earthquake there also were other resurrections. Matthew tells us:

Matthew 27:51-53 (ESV) ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

This was a precursor of the promised general resurrection that will occur when Jesus returns for His Church.

B. Response of the women

There is something very fitting and appropriate in that Mary Magdalene (who previously had had 7 demons) and the other Mary (Salome) should be the first to receive the news of the risen Lord.

It was not a high religious official. It was not one of the disciples. It was not one of the family - not even His mother. It was not a man, but two women who really believed in Jesus and even though they thought Jesus was dead, they were willing to continue serving Him.

They had not deserted Jesus at the cross - even as they stood helplessly by during His dying.

BUT, make no mistake, the women were also afraid (**v. 8b**) even as they were filled with joy - and they ran to tell someone - anyone. It is only Jesus who can allow us to see God. He bridges the gap.

There are various responses to Jesus:

Some become like dead men

Others confess

Matthew 27:54 (ESV) ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

This good news was so good that the women had to:

II. Hurry (verse 7).

Some things ought to be savored and time taken to enjoy:

Time With A Friend Or Mate

A Meal

A Vacation

Worshipping God

Other things demand urgency and immediate attention. “There is a tornado coming! Head for the basement.” That information requires immediate action and faith in the message (messenger). Code Blue in a hospital requires immediate attention by those equipped and trained to help.

Jesus does not say: “take your time.” Jesus says, hurry! because it is not OUR time, it is HIS. One of the worst things a Christian can say is that they are bored, or killing time, or they don’t have anything to do. Certainly no one should be bored including children. There are people every day that are dying who do not know Jesus. And if you die that way you are in **BIG TROUBLE**.

A. Go quickly they are told

and they do as they are told. It says in **verse 8** ... they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

B. Others also ran to the tomb.

Do you remember? John's gospel tells us of the reaction to the news the women carried: When they heard the news, Peter and John ran to the tomb. John arrives first - then Peter. Most commentators would suggest it was because of age that John arrived first. It could also be that Peter started to think about what he might see when he got there and some of the eagerness wore off during the course of the journey. If Jesus was alive, what would Peter say to him after his denial?

God knows that we need purpose to our being hurried. The reason we are to hurry is so we can:

III. Tell (the good news)

The only thing that would make these early evangelists go - was they believed. The reason we do not go is maybe we do not believe with all our hearts, or we are afraid of ridicule rather than God's disapproval.

Matthew's account says, "tell the disciples;" but Mark's gospel says, tell the disciples AND PETER ([Mark 16:7](#)). Peter was included. This had to be good news for Peter - an act of grace.

One writer has said, "the most precious thing about Jesus is the way in which He trusts us on the field of our defeat."

A. What were these early followers told?

1. Jesus was no longer in the tomb. The tomb was empty. He had risen from the dead just like he said.
2. Get ready for instructions ([Matthew 28:16-20](#))

B. Why not another miracle?

[Luke 16](#) can give us insight into the reasoning behind that. (Retell story and read [verse 31](#) below). [Luke 16:31 \(ESV\)](#) ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

People must be ready to hear the Word otherwise all miracles can be subjectively explained away. No amount of evidence will convince those who have their mind made up that there is no God.

“The time between Jesus’ death and His return is characterized by the absence of Jesus, but the presence of the Word.” - Fred Craddock

Conclusion: If Jesus had not risen, only the historically astute would have ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is not just a man in history, though, He is history. He will end history and time as we understand it now. He is not just a memory. He is a presence - Someone to meet.

Have YOU met Him?

The continuing existence of the Christian Church stands as some of the best evidence to the resurrection. *You*, as followers of Christ, are the best proof as to the truth of the statement: **He is risen!**

What could have possibly changed sadness into joy, and fear into courage, in such a dramatic way? The disciples had quit following Jesus and now they were getting another chance. **AND** you must know, there are not an infinite number of chances in life.

We started with an earthquake, and the end of time will be similar.

Hebrews 12:25-29 (ESV) ²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” ²⁷ This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

On this Easter day, may I leave you with this Benediction:

Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV) ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.