

## Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’



## He's Not Here

Friends, I came to the church by myself today, looking for Jesus. I came, thinking maybe I would find him, sheltering in place.

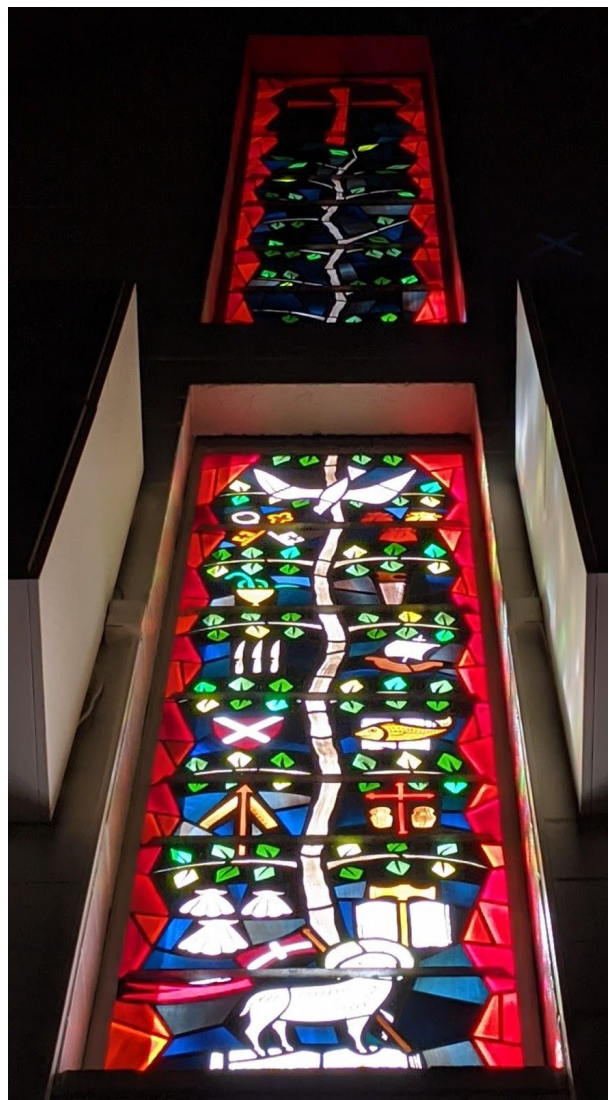
- I checked out my office, and the Sunday school room, and even back here by the coffee machine. (I know I've needed a lot of coffee these last few days... so I figured maybe he was feeling about the same.)
- I searched for Jesus in the pews, thinking maybe he would be praying,
  - And up in the choir loft, thinking maybe he would have a song to share with us today.
- I looked for Jesus under the the communion table,
  - And behind the pulpit.

But, Jesus was nowhere to be found. All I found here was chairs and a microphone, a bunch of books, and an empty building. And the earth might not have shaken, and I guess I can't really say that an angel of the Lord, with lightning like appearance, descended from heaven to open up the church doors for me.

- But, I did hear a still small voice say to me: "Do not be afraid."
- I did remember that gospel Matthew wrote, saying, "I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified."
- I did remember how that angel told the women at the tomb that day, "He is not here."
- And imagined how those faithful women trembled when they learned, "He has been raised."

So, I realized that this must be the Good News God wants to share with us today. Jesus is not in this lonely church building, waiting for us all to come back. No, Christ is risen! And he's long since left this place.

- He's gone ahead of us. Just how he went to Galilee, he's gone to all those places where people yearn for new life and liberation, where they cry out for healing and good news. That's where Jesus is today.
  - The risen Christ is in all those hospital rooms where people wait anxiously for ventilators.
  - He's in the homes of those who worry as they self-quarantine.
  - He's with everyone who keeps on working, like farmers and hospital cleaning staff, delivery drivers and garbage collectors.
  - Jesus walks again with everyone who has lost their job, and is struggling to put food on their table or pay their rent.



So, if you want to see the risen Christ, don't come here. But, look out into the world, into all those places where people suffer, because it is there that He is hard at work, sharing hope, bringing healing, and offering new life to all!

Jesus is not here today. And the church is not here either, because we are following the risen Christ into a new kind of life. The kind of life that makes sacrifices for our neighbors and cares for the vulnerable. The kind of life that sews masks or donates to the food-bank. The kind of life that Christ has given us is a life that shouts out encouragement to medical professionals when they change their shifts. It is the kind of life that drops off groceries for those who are at risk. It is the kind of life that gives blood and shares hope.

- The church is not here today, because you are following Christ in doing the work that brings new life to our world. And I thank God for that!

Our church is not here today, because we know that the Kingdom of God cannot be quarantined and the new life that Christ brings will never end. So we can celebrate Easter any day. Our church is already talking about how we might reschedule our Easter Cantata, because we know that Jesus will continue to bring new life into the world - and that's worth celebrating - through this pandemic, after we've recovered, and forever more. So, each and every day we'll rejoice in the new life we have been given, by sharing it with others, and by saying, Christ is Risen! Alleluia, and Amen!

Amen

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