

## Go Quickly and Tell

Colossians 3:1-4  
Matthew 28:1-10

*“Then go quickly and tell his disciples,  
‘He has been raised from the dead...’”*  
Matthew 28:7a (NRSV)<sup>1</sup>

**It almost seems too good to be true!** What two women – both named Mary – saw and heard on that first day of the week was anything *beyond* their imagining. And... (when you stop to think of it)...probably beyond anything we, too, might expect.

Oh...I know you’ve *heard* of resurrection – a return to life... Who of us in the – (*largely* Christian inhabited) – Western world has not at least *heard* the story of Easter. It differs slightly, (depending on which gospel you choose to read)... But the **basic** story is the same...

- Of *women* coming to a stone-hewn tomb of Jesus...
- Early on a Sunday – the *first day* of the week.
- There they see – (or discover) – the large *stone rolled away* from the tomb.
- An angel gives them the news and tells them to *see the empty tomb* for themselves.

And then,

- In some cases (in Matthew and John), the *Risen Christ appears* to them in a place nearby.

*You know the story* – as well as I do. Even if you only manage to attend Church once or twice a year, it’s probably the one story that stands-out among the rest of those about Jesus... because it’s so strange! It defies logic!

## I

**Don’t ask me to explain...**for the miracle – like **all** miracles *cannot* be explained. Remembering something that Buechner once said... It’s like trying to explain a joke – when you

stop and think of it... Either you **'get it'**...or you don't.

Likely you have heard other preachers – tell you the significance of the Resurrection...

Recalling how...

It's the *central doctrine* (or teaching) of the Church.

Jesus was raised by God in his *fully human* form.

How...

Resurrection marks the *victory of life over death* as we know it...

And even how...

Women were the *first messengers* – or preachers – of Easter.

Likely, too, you have heard all that before...on Easter mornings like this one.

But *did you hear* the **command** that comes down to us in the story? Maybe you've heard the *words* – spoken by the angel to the startled women at the tomb – but haven't really thought of their implications...or just dismissed them as 'dramatic effect'...

(Sort of like the message of an angel to shepherds on the night of Christ's birth.)

**"Do not be afraid... You are looking for Jesus who was crucified.**

**He is not here... He has been raised."**<sup>2</sup>

**That, of course, is the message.**

*But do you remember* the rest of the message...the rest of what the angel told them?

Two things – just to jog your memory...

**"Come see the place where he lay..."**

And then...

**"Go quickly and tell his disciples..."**<sup>3</sup>

(This is *similar* – by the way – to what the angels say to the women in Mark – the oldest gospel.<sup>4</sup>)

The words "go" and "tell" are spoken in the *imperative* voice, which simply means...

What the women at the tomb are given is *a command* – not just a message to deliver...but *a command*...

“Go quickly and tell...”

## II

**What I am suggesting** is that the command for messengers of Easter – about what is seen and heard – is not only for *two women* – but a command for **you** and me as well. **Why?** *It's not enough* to hear – or even to see – what God has done in raising Jesus... The significance of Easter is what that raising – what that message – does for us. What **God** does for us.

**For some** of you, admittedly, the resurrection means little or nothing. You would be the first to admit that it has not changed your life. In fact, you may be here, more out of ‘tradition’ than anything.

Most folks in your family *go to church* on Easter morning – for the most part – so why not ‘tag along.’ Maybe a good Sunday brunch – at a fine restaurant – is in the offing...so... *Why not?*

You’re not antagonistic to Jesus... He seems like a pretty decent guy ...But Church is just not your thing. So, the command to “Go quickly and tell...” means nothing to you. You hear it...and move on.

**Others of us** may hear the command for what it is...but have a hard time with ‘following through.’ Easter is a ‘joy-filled day’ ... But that’s **all** it is...just a day. Spring or Easter break ends tomorrow...some of us have to drive back home or to school this afternoon.

On Monday – or soon thereafter – it’s back to the grind...for some of us...or back to the usual routine for the rest of us.

“Go quickly and tell...”

might be a command for the women at the tomb...or perhaps for others that we know... But – as commands go – the words have little practical use for you... It makes little difference in ‘The real world.’

**And then there are a few others...**who may hear the words of Easter for – what I believe – they really are... Not just a command to ‘go and tell,’ but a summons...a ‘*call to action*’ – if you will.

“Go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead...’”

But how do we actually **do** that? How do we ‘go and tell’ others without being ‘preachy’ or ‘pushy’? Look...few of us – least of all ‘Preachers’... or most Presbyterians I know – like talking for very long with someone who’s ‘got religion’ – or who seem more religious than we are... It’s awkward... sometimes a little *intimidating!*

Yet, telling others that ‘Christ is risen’ is not an ‘in your face’ sort of message. More often, I find, it’s a message we live by... It’s a faith that we carry. It’s even a demeanor that we have.

Tom Long tells of a friend of his who was once admitted to the hospital with a severe pain in his stomach. As it turns out, the pain was due to a massive blockage in his small intestine. The man underwent emergency surgery, followed by a restless – pain-filled – night in his hospital bed.

Early the next morning – just as the sun was rising, a nurse – one he had not seen before – came into his room and began to check his vital signs. “*How are you*” she asked tenderly.

Gazing out the window – at the streak of sunlight – the man answered...

“It looks like it might be a good day.”

“*Honey,*” she said, “*every day that the Lord has made is a good day. We will rejoice and be glad in it.*”

The man, a Christian, recognized this as a line from the Bible. Reaching into his memory, he recited a few words of another Bible verse. The nurse recognized the verse and whispered the last few words with him. Then she recited another verse...and he finished it with her.

*And so it began...* As she filled his water pitcher...and smoothed his blanket...the two of them spoke a few words of Scripture back and forth...some from the Psalms...some from the Gospels. One would begin...the other would finish.

“It made me forget the pain and discomfort for a while.”<sup>5</sup>

## III

There are places – even in your own life, I expect – that you see the hope God brings to us.

- When a person has lost a dear loved-one – and is comforted by a friend.
- When we face a terminal illness – and something deep within us says... ‘Do not be afraid.’
- When a tragedy strikes a community...like Boston...or Sandy Hook...or Blacksburg...or a grade school in Nashville – and people rally behind those who are lost or injured.

“Easter faith is about reaching out,” says Marek Zabriskie.  
 “Every...kind word, every deed and act of Christian love is part of the great cosmic drama inspired by God’s *reaching out* to us when Jesus rose from the grave.”<sup>6</sup>

**Truthfully though**, most of us will leave the message of Easter where we usually do ...  
*behind us* ...perhaps in Church where it *seems* to belong. We may come and hear it again *next*  
 year... on another spring morning. *But in the meantime*, the words...

“He has been raised”

may have little effect on... *how* we do business,  
*study* for exams...  
*collect* our retirement...or  
*watch* the evening news.

**And yet... if even for a few of us**, the message provokes another thought on how...  
 ‘we live...and move...and have our being’ (as Paul says)...then *let it be so*.

“Go quickly and tell his disciples...”

Not **just** his disciples, I would add, but to **all** and any who may have ears to hear.

“This is my message for **you**”<sup>7</sup> the angel says.

*The Lord is risen!*

**He is risen indeed!**

*Hallelujah!*