

Resurrection—“Come and See...Go and Tell”

Thomas Robinson, *Easter*, March 27, 2016

Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20 (Cf. Mk 16; Lk 24; Jn 20-21)

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, “**You, do not be afraid**, for I know that you seek **Jesus who was crucified**. ⁶ **He is not here, for he has been raised**, as he said. **Come, see the place** where he lay. ⁷ Then **go quickly and tell** his **disciples** that he has **been raised 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**.” ...

¹⁶ Now **the eleven disciples** went to **Galilee**, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**. ¹⁹ **Go** therefore and **make disciples of all nations/Gentiles, baptizing them** in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, ²⁰ **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age.”

Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 15-19, 22, 27-28, 30-31

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? | Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? | ... ⁷ All who see me mock me; | ... they wag their heads; | ⁸ “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; | let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”....

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, ... | you lay me in the dust of death.¹⁶ ... | a company of evildoers encircles me; | they have pierced my hands and feet – | ¹⁷ I can count all my bones – | they stare and gloat over me; | ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, | and for my clothing they cast lots. | ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off! | O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ...

²² I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; | in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.... | ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember | and turn to the LORD, | and all the families of the nations/ Gentiles | shall worship before you. | ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, | and he rules over the nations/Gentiles.... | ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him; | it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; | ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, | that he has done it.

Matthew 27:45-50

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”

1 Corinthians 15:20

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Can This Really Be Happening?

Jesus' resurrection is not a doctrine; it is an event. Christian life has many teachings, but none would be known or noticed without what happened that Spring morning, 1986 years ago. Jesus wasn't like other religious founders who labored years to build a religious community. If Jesus had simply stayed in the tomb, nothing would have happened: A different world. But Jesus' resurrection is also a difficult and challenging event. First, it's impossible. Everyone knows that dead is dead. That's why we love near-death experiences and zombies or ghosts. Running through the narrative of Jesus' resurrection is that very human response of doubt. Of course many loved him, but.... One disciple helped have him arrested, others fled when a violent death loomed. He was placed in a tomb. The two Marys went to see the tomb, not a resurrection. Even as they encounter Jesus, fear swirls with joy inside them. The disciples see Jesus and worship, but some doubt. How could it be different? If something's too good to be true, it usually isn't. If this was actually happening – not a dream or ancient myth or philosophical doctrine – then the world is a very different place from what we thought. It might just be possible not to be afraid, even in the face of death, of anything! Mt wants us to sense that transforming miracle (earthquake): to the women, "You, don't be afraid!" The challenge of Jesus' resurrection hasn't changed. It was impossible then as now. Doubt is built in. But the fact that it happened changes everything. Like Mary Magdalene, I am confronted with a different world, physically, existentially, on the deepest levels of life. I live in a world wide open. Not draining down into death. Open to God, open to life.

Hearing an Old Story Again for the First Time

As Matthew like other disciples looked back on this transforming event and lived out its effects, they wondered why they had not seen it clearly before it happened. Why didn't Mary expect more than a tomb, even though Jesus had told them? They had a story that they thought was unfolding from scripture, exciting, with Jesus as a new king, renewing all. Now they saw that was only part of the story. The dark narrative of deep suffering for God's people and God's servant and hope beyond that suffering, a story that ran through so much of the prophets and psalms, was (naturally) blocked out. The realization that Jesus was embodying God's people as Messiah and taking that pain and death on himself, was something they could see only after it happened – the fact that he was conquering not Rome but death and every empire built on death. Conquest of death through death and into new resurrection life! It was all something none of the disciples had ever dreamed. Now Mt looks back at scripture and sees it new. He and others remember Jesus crucifixion and resurrection and hear so many echoes of Psalm 22 and other passages. And as Mt tells us about these events, he emphasizes details that help us hear the connection as well: The sufferer's (Israel's, the Servant's) journey from abandonment and death to the very surprising outcome of celebration of God's kingdom among all the nations of earth. Jesus had supplied the powerful transition that made the journey possible – his resurrection.

What Does a New World Look Like

Jesus points his disciples into that new unexpected world. They will live among all kinds of claims of power and authority. They need to see God's kingdom! That deeper than the tumult of human violence and authority is the authority of God's self-giving love embodied in the crucified Jesus, raised into new life. They will be emissaries of that old/new kingdom. That God is personal, loving. They call everyone to learn, to plunge into God's life in Jesus and in God's Spirit. Teach, learn, practice. Never be afraid. This new life unites them forever.