Easter A 2026 Matthew 28:1-10

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

I have been saying those words for as long as I can remember, because I'm lucky enough to have been part of the church for as long as I can remember—before I can remember, really. The liturgy, ritual, tradition have always been a love and a comfort. When I was growing up, we always attended the early service, which was at 8:15, in the morning, and as I am a night owl by nature, not an early bird, there were certainly times I wished the church's practice was *not* to gather first thing on Sunday mornings; but that was never a spiritual struggle, just a weekly fight with the snooze button. Except for one Easter Sunday during a particularly angsty season of my teenage years that I remember not wanting to be in church. I don't recall what was happening at school or with my friends or in my family that put me in such a bad mood, but I knew that the Easter service—Sunrise service, for the record—would involve flowers and music and pomp and circumstance, and I did not want to take my cranky self into the middle of all that Easter joy. I went anyway; probably because wasn't given a choice. And I would like to be able to say the moral of the story is that all that glorious Easter worship warmed my cold, hard heart…but I don't remember that happening. In fact, I think I sat outside afterwards in a huff, impatient to go home. But I will say it was good practice for still showing up when life circumstances were less than ideal…because that's certainly happened more than once since that Easter in my teens.

This season of my life is full, in good ways, but I'd be pretty short-sighted not to notice the medical and professional and interpersonal battles that people close to me are fighting. We come here to worship the Prince of Peace yet personally and globally we live in the midst of wars: besides our individual struggles, our society is waging a war not on poverty but on the poorest and most vulnerable among us; a war on the environment, or as we people of faith are supposed to call it, God's creation, which we were given not to exploit or destroy but to tend and to keep; and of course, literal wars, the latest of which has already claimed the lives not just of those brave enough to sign up to fight it, but of civilians, innocents, children—again the most vulnerable who always suffer when humanity decides to solve the problems of its own making through violence. It may seem naive or hypocritical or delusional to come to church and

celebrate the resurrection when we see so much death and destruction around us. But isn't that exactly why we need it?

Each gospel writer tells the story a little differently, but Matthew tells us that on the first resurrection day, two of the Marys went to see the tomb. They were not ignoring, denying, or avoiding their grief at Jesus' death or the injustice of the world that caused it; they were going to stare right at it. They didn't expect earthquakes or angels or the risen Jesus; they expected to see the tomb—and they do. And it is because they are there, looking right at the very worst of what humanity is capable of doing, that they are able to see what great things God can do. Not even death, the worst enemy of all, is beyond the power of the living, loving Lord. The angel gives them the good news of the resurrection and instructs them to share it with the other disciples, but this revelation and their great joy only come *after* they go to see the tomb. The resurrection doesn't make any sense until they first face death; *after* they see the tomb, *then* they get to see the risen Jesus.

Likewise, nobody is asking us to come here this morning or any morning and pretend—pretend that everything is fine, pretend that our world is not a mess, pretend that we ourselves are not a mess. First we see the tomb, *then* we get to celebrate the living Lord who left that tomb empty. Even so, there's more to the story. The Marys go out with great joy…but, Matthew tells us, also with fear. Both the angel and the risen Jesus himself have to tell them *Do not be afraid*...and no wonder; everything they thought they knew about how the world worked had just been upended. If dead men walk out of their tombs and are alive again, what else might happen? Maybe we need to hear that good news, too, that encouragement, *Do not be afraid,* because as much as we may want to see God bring new life out of so much that is deadly in our world, we may not be ready or willing or brave enough to see or to participate in the ways God makes that happen. Thank goodness God isn't waiting on us.

Mary Magdalene and whichever other Mary was with her went to see the tomb, but what they ended up seeing was the Lord of Life who could not be contained by the tomb. As wonderful as that was, as frightening as that was, it came with a great responsibility: to go and tell everyone else. And that is our invitation, too: to see the evil in this world, to trust that it is no match for the power of God's love, and to share that hope with others who, just like us, so desperately need to hear it. And so, not in spite of our battles but because of the Help we have to fight them, we shout the good news: Alleluia! Christ is risen!