

Introduction: People, especially adults, are creatures of habit who easily get into ruts of routine. When this happens, they lose their sense of child-like wonder. *** Most of us learn best by personal experience, and not so much by listening to others. *** It is rare that someone who does not have a personal passion about a subject can hear and act upon what people share on that subject. (You all have probably noticed over the years that I do not have a passion for fashion.) In other words, we tend to tune people out unless they are talking about our personal interests. *** This explains why in America today many people do not get excited about the story of Jesus. *** Who could believe that God could be born a human baby boy and live a perfect life? But, this happened two thousand years ago when Jesus, THE Savior, walked on this earth, teaching about God and His ways; and, He did miracles for many needy people. *** But, self-righteous religious people were scandalized that He showed LOVE for all people, even enemies; and, He especially loved the poor, widows, orphans, foreigners and sinners who turned to Him seeking His forgiveness and help. *** Most amazing, and painful to His followers, He (God's Son) allowed people to crucify Him on the day of Passover when God rescued His people from centuries of physical bondage. No one knew He willingly offered His Life-Blood to cover over their sins. Then after most people rested and worshipped on the Sabbath day following His death, He rose from the dead on the first day of the week. *** And, our text from Matthew this morning said He first revealed Himself alive again to two women. In first century Rome women were excluded from all civil and public functions. They could not vote or represent themselves in court. They were therefore not considered reliable witnesses. Yet God chose these two women to be the first witnesses to His resurrection. **Jesus reveals His Life to women first** *** With this background, let's examine our Good News passage for this Easter Sunday.

I. Two female followers of Jesus come to look at the grave, and an angel knows they are seeking Jesus who has been crucified.
(Matthew 28:1-5)

A. At dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to look at the grave, Behold! An angel had rolled away the stone, his appearance like lightning. (Verses 1-3)

1. But, after the Sabbath, it is becoming dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. (Verse 1)

After Sabbath: Unlike the chief priests, who worked with Pilate on the Sabbath to guard the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66), these two women rested and worshipped God on the Sabbath.

Two Marys: Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary of Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). The other Mary was Cleopas' wife, mother of one of Jesus' apostles James the 'lesser', (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:20).

Look at grave: Out of love for Jesus, they visit His grave, just to look at it, at their first opportunity.

2. Behold! It was a great earthquake; for an angel of The Lord having descended from heaven and come, rolled the stone away and was sitting on it; his appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. (Verses 2-3)

Earthquake: The word for earthquake is *seismos*. (English will steal words from any language!)

Rolled away stone: The angel rolled away the stone after the earthquake, which was for the guards.

Lightning and snow: The metaphors combine a thunderstorm with a snow fall. A mixing of opposite seasons, except for 'thunder snow'.

B. The guards were shaken with fear; but the angel said to the women: You must not be afraid, Jesus who has been crucified, you are seeking. (Verses 4-5)

1. From fear of him, those guarding quaked and had become like dead men. (Verse 4)

'Scared to death': The earthquake, then an angel rolls the stone, they were almost 'scared to death'.

2. But the angel, having answered, said to the women: You must not be fearing – you! For I know that Jesus, who has been crucified, you are seeking. (Verse 5)

Fear not: Roman soldiers feared, but the angel emphatically tells Jesus' female followers they must not be afraid!

Crucified: They had seen Jesus crucified on Friday; but, this is now the third day since, the beginning of a new week – and a new age of grace!

Seeking: Against all logic, they had come to look at the grave in hope of doing something for the One who they knew had loved them.

II. He has risen, just as He said, and the women depart with fear and joy; Behold! Jesus met them and they worship Him, then He sends them to His brothers so Him they will see. (Matthew 28:6-10)

A. He has risen as He said; and, the women quickly depart with fear and great joy to tell His disciples. (Verses 6-8)

1. He is not being here: For He is risen just as He said; Come, you must see the place where He was lying. (Verse 6)

Been raised: Jesus has already been, and still IS raised from the dead! Good News!!!

Gospel Word: Jesus had said, 'Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13); and also, 'I lay down My life that I may take it again ... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again' (John 10:17-18). This is the whole point of the three day Passover weekend in 30 AD: Jesus died for us that our sins might be forgiven, and He rose for us that we may have life that is right now: eternal, abundant and with eternal purpose (John 3, 10, 15)

2. And, quickly, after being led, you must tell His disciples, 'He has risen from the dead!'; And, behold!! He is going before you into Galilee; there, Him you will see, Behold!!! I have told you. (Verse 7)

Tell: The angel tells the two women named Mary to tell Jesus' disciples of His Resurrection!

Galilee: And they must also direct the disciples to Galilee to see Him there.

I have told: God's messenger sends them away with these words, 'I [speaking for God] have told you'.

3. Having departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to report [His Resurrection] to His disciples. (Verse 8)

Fear and joy: Notice the mixed emotions over the unexpected good news! They are afraid to believe something so wonderful can be true AND they have great joy because it is just as He said. It is both awe and gratitude!

Quickly ran: So they run to the Eleven with this extremely good report God's messenger has just given them – Jesus IS Alive!

B. Behold! Jesus meets them and they worship Him; then Jesus says they must take word to His brothers that they leave into Galilee, and there Me they will see. (*Verses 9-10*)

1. Behold!!!! Jesus met them, saying, 'Greetings!' And, having come to (Him), they took hold of His feet, and they worshipped Him. (*Verse 9*)

Meets and greets: The fourth narrative 'behold' grabs our attention about something too important to miss, it is a wake up! Jesus meets the women and greets them with the typical informal greeting meaning grace. The first followers Jesus revealed Himself to after His Resurrection were women.

Jesus reveals His Life to women first

God of surprise: I already said how Romans had little regard for women. It would be inconceivable to them that women would be chosen as the first witnesses to The Resurrection – but not to God! He is the God of surprise, turning all human expectations upside down and on their heads.

Worship: The women were not thinking of any of this. They simply and humbly worshipped the One they loved, who they feared was dead, and they now see alive!

2. Then Jesus said to them, 'Not you must be afraid. You must go. You must take word to My brothers that they may leave to Galilee, and there, Me they will see. (*Verse 10*)

Fear not: Now Jesus tells the two women not to fear.

Go to brothers: Again, He sends them to His disciples, calling them brothers. Jesus revealed Himself alive to women first because He may have trusted them to go tell the Eleven.

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Me they see: And, after they told His disciples He was alive and would meet them at Galilee, He gives this wonderful good news: Me, they will see. There is no greater blessing in life than to see God. (*Psalms 17:1-7, 15*)

GOSPEL: Anyone who approaches God by acknowledging he needs to be saved from himself, believes that Jesus died to forgive him of his sins, confesses them to God and asks forgiveness because he believes Jesus took his death sentence on Himself when He died on The Cross, that one will be forgiven, adopted into God's family by grace and receive Jesus' Resurrection life which is eternal, abundant and with a purpose. This is what Good Friday and Easter are all about!

C. A worshipper Yahweh has saved gives thanks because the stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, and it is wonderful. (*Psalms 118:25-29*)

Structure: The first three verses are spoken by an individual worshipper. The last three are spoken by the whole congregation of worshippers.

1. Open to me the gates of righteousness / I will enter through them, I will give thanks to Yah / This is the gate of Yahweh / the righteous will enter through it. (*Verses 19-20*)

Gates: The gates are the entrance to the Temple courtyard.

Righteousness: Only those who are righteous and without sin may enter the place where God dwells.

2. I will give thanks to Thee for Thou have answered me / and Thou became to me salvation. (*Verse 21*)

Salvation: An individual with a heart before God desiring to be righteous by faith to enter God's Presence, thanks Him for answering him and becoming his salvation. This is exactly what Jesus did for whoever will come to Him in humble dependent faith in His crucifixion and resurrection for him.

3. The stone [which] those building rejected / has become head of [the] corner. (*Verse 22*)

Rejected: The proud chief priests rejected Jesus out of a jealous desire to be like God, rather than to be content being the ones who helped God's people to become righteous before Him by the Torah given through Moses.

Proud leaders reject the righteous one

Head of corner: Now, after His Resurrection, Jesus is the Head of God's new people – His Church.

4. This has come to be from Yahweh / it is wonderful in our eyes. (*Verse 23*)

Wonderful: Only extreme acts of God are called wonderful. One is creation. Another is the delivery of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. But the Death and Resurrection of Jesus is even more wonderful because He did it for all people of every ethnic group on earth.

5. This [is] the day Yahweh has made / we will rejoice and will be glad in it. (*Verse 24*)

First day of week: Because Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, His Church changed the day of worship from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week. But as many count days, The Church actually worships on the eighth day of the week, signifying something entirely new!

CALL: I am over sixty eight years old. People my age have heard these truths about Jesus and people over fifty five times in their lives. The bottom line is what are we going to do about it? Mentally assenting to these truths is NOT enough. Surrendering ourselves to God IN Jesus in humble, dependent, obedient faith is not a 'once and done' proposition. God desires that all of us live surrendered lives of faithful obedience to Him every hour of our lives from now until we meet Him face-to-face. If you have never made that kind of continuous forever commitment to God IN Jesus, today is the day to make it! And for those of us who have, we know it is hard, but today is the day to renew that commitment because of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday! I will stay here after the final song as long as anyone might want to talk to me about this.

Conclusion: At dawn two Marys come to the tomb to see it, having rested on the Sabbath. After a great earthquake that scared the Roman guards almost to death, an angel speaks to them to not be afraid: Jesus, whom they are seeking, has risen from the dead, just as He said; and he sends them to Jesus' disciples. They go with extreme and opposite emotions of fear and joy. Behold! Jesus meets them and they worship Him. Then He sends them to Galilee. All this was predicted in a Messianic *Psalms* written hundreds of years earlier!

Jesus reveals His Life to women first