

# EASTER - APRIL 12

**Describe a time when you were surprised because you thought you knew something - and what you knew turned out not to be the case after all.**

## **Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>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." <sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

## **Reflection**

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had thought they at least knew how to mourn. That's why they came to the tomb: there were prescribed rituals for burial. These rituals were most often women's work. The two Mary's knew them. Performing them was an act of caregiving. It would be one last way they could honor Jesus, one final chance to show their love. After all that had been taken from them, they thought they could at least give that.

But when they arrived at the tomb, they had a very different encounter. With a sudden great earthquake, an angel appears and explains that things aren't as they had planned. The angel said "Do not be afraid" and explains what has happened to Jesus and has them come and see for themselves. They are then told to go tell the disciples. The women left fearfully, but joyfully too. Suddenly there is a second surprise – Jesus greets them and he also says, "Do not be afraid". Go and tell....

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing our lives profoundly, and it might have felt like an earthquake at first with all of the change. Schools switching to e-learning for a month, or the remainder of the academic year, might create real sadness. Maybe you're missing birthday parties, or soccer games, or music festivals. Maybe your favorite restaurant is closed, your local park has "no entry" signs posted, your big plans – or your small ones – are erased from the calendar. Maybe you just long to see a friend's face in person, not behind a mask, not on a screen. Maybe you're missing out on the special ways your church and family typically celebrate Easter. Maybe even though the sun is shining and the flowers are blooming, you feel tired, and sad, and uncertain.

In some ways, we are like Mary at the tomb on that first Easter. We thought we knew what to expect and then everything changed. Did you notice that both the angel and Jesus' first words were "Do not be afraid". A lot has changed right now, but there is a truth that hasn't changed.

The powers that killed Jesus had not won, after all. The violence that seemed triumphant turned out not to be the stronger force. Mary is commissioned to share the Good News that life and love have the last word. We can do the same.

Maybe the good news this Easter is that even though parts of the world as we knew it are being undone, these eternal truths are reaffirmed. Like Mary, we are recognized and known, by the One whose life and love renews each of us and all the world.

We can go and tell the good news – we can do this with great joy. ALLELUIA!



John 20:1-18 · illustratedministry.com

### Discussion Questions

1. What is different about your life within the last month or two? What has remained the same?
2. What are some losses you are mourning?
3. Where do you see new life and love around you?

### Prayer

Dear God, we give thanks that you know us, and all the world, and that you love us, and all the world. When we are sad and uncertain, remind us that there is no power greater than your love. **Am**