

**Matthew 28:1-10 (NRSV)**

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

---

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Marcus Borg<sup>1</sup> tells the story of a 3-year old girl. She was the firstborn and only child in her family, but now her mother was pregnant again and the little girl was very excited about having a new brother. Within a few hours of the parents bringing the new baby boy home from the hospital the girl made a request: she wanted to be alone with her new brother in his room with the door shut. Her insistence about being alone with the baby with the door shut made her parents a bit uneasy, but then they remembered that they had installed an intercom system in anticipation of the baby's arrival, so they realized they could let their daughter do this and if

---

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Borg (1989) *The Heart of Christianity*. New York: Harper Collins. P. 113

they heard the slightest indication that anything strange was happening they could be in the baby's room in an instant.

So they let the little girl go into the baby's room and shut the door and then they raced to the intercom listening station. They heard their daughter's footsteps moving across the baby's room, imagined her standing over the baby's crib and then they heard her say to her three-day-old brother, "Tell me about God – I've almost forgotten."

"Tell me about God – I've almost forgotten." Easter tells us about God and Easter also tells us about us. Because that 3-year old girl remembered what we sometimes forget – that we come from God and that we return to God and that the journey in-between is always a journey in God and with God.

Her three-day old brother had a little advantage, since he was fresh from God so he still knew all this. Some of us, and I count myself among them, aren't quite fresh from God anymore. And as time goes on, we start believing what the world tells us about how things work, rather than what God tells us. Even that 3-year-old is already receiving messages that what is important is not to whom she belongs, but rather what belongs to her, not her consciousness of God but rather her consciousness of herself. We start to wonder whether we attractive enough, rich enough, capable enough until that consciousness of self becomes self-consciousness and then self-estrangement. In Fred Buechner's words, we stop living from the inside out and start living from the outside in, because what starts to become important is not what is inside us, but rather what is outside us.

We know this life of exile, of self-estrangement, of being dry bones in a valley of dry bones, we know it all too well. As I listened to the Passion story this past week as it is recorded in Saint Matthew's Gospel, for some reason, this time I heard poor Judas'

story afresh. After he betrays Jesus he goes back to the chief priests and the elders and confesses his mistake – “I have shed innocent blood,” he says. But it’s too late. It isn’t that God can’t forgive him, he can’t forgive himself. He places himself beyond reconciliation because he believes what the chief priests believe about him. As C.S. Lewis tells us, the doors of Hell are locked from the inside, and barred by people who have come to believe what the world tells them about themselves.

But what the world tells you about yourself isn’t the whole story, and that 3-year-old girl and her three-day-old brother know about the rest of the story. They know that God rejoices in them just as they are, and in us, just as we are. Easter comes to remind us that we aren’t attractive enough or rich enough or capable enough, no, we sure aren’t, and *it doesn’t matter*. The important work is already done and all we need to do is accept that we are accepted, which, for some reason, we have a hard time doing.

And that is why we need to be born again, literally reborn, born into a new life that is ruled not by the messages of this world that tear us down and make us feel unworthy and second-best, but rather a new life that is ruled by God, who loves and cherishes us and has great plans for us. A new life lived from the inside out, not from the outside in, a life that is rooted not in our consciousness of our alienated selves but rather our consciousness of God, rooted not in what belongs to us but rather in to whom we belong.

A final thought – sometimes, I suspect, we think that the life that God wants for us is going to be a lot less fun than the life we plan for ourselves, and that being bored is the price of being redeemed. You know, when you’re young you sow your wild oats, have a good time, and then, if you’ve calculated your remaining time as efficiently as possible, you can live just long enough as a boring and redeemed person to make God forget what an absolute selfish jerk you were for most of your life. So God will overlook

all that and send you on to heaven, where, presumably, you can be bored for all eternity.

But, that 3-year-old and that 3-day-old know something that we've forgotten, that a life with God is a rich and good and surprising life; that life lived in God offers wonderful times, great insights and dear relationships of all kinds, wealth and purpose and meaning and truth beyond what we can seize or create for ourselves. This is the life we begin to live together ruled by God as disciples in this community of disciples, a life I realize I'm very lucky to be a part of.

And so we go on to Galilee, where Christ has gone on before us. We're not exactly sure where our Galilee is, or what it holds, but we know that God in Christ is there and he wants a life for us that is good and surprising and true, and that's good enough to get us started. And we're lucky that we have new babies here at Saint Nicholas practically all the time, because if we get confused, we can always ask them: "Tell me about God – I've almost forgotten."

Amen.