

## Easter Sermon 2023 Year A

### Matthew 28:1-10

“For an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.”

In the Bible we usually do not see angels sitting. We see them active, busy delivering messages and protecting God’s people. We could include these examples.

It just seems that sitting is not their job description.

But today after the angel of the Lord comes from heaven to roll back the stone that covered the opening of the empty grave, and he sits on it.

Yes, He has a message to deliver. But he will deliver it sitting down. The fighting is over. The victory is won. Those who had put Jesus to death, had done everything that could. Did everything that their own strength could muster up. Even sealing the tomb, to verify that it was the crucified Jesus being placed in the Tomb.

Placing guards to protect the tomb so that Jesus disciples would not come and steal the body and spread the story that Jesus had risen from the dead. But look at the soldiers in our gospel this morning. Look how strong they are now.

Trembling and struck with fear. They are like dead men. The fighting is over. The battle is done! The battle on the cross, the crushing wages of sin, the terror of death and dying, and the battle against the devil is done. And there is a victor. And He is the one no longer in the grave. So now the angel can sit and rest awhile. And bring the message of Good News to those who live in fear, with guilt, and regrets.

And the Message is: **“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 and see the place where He lay.”**

Two things to highlight this morning.

First, do not be afraid. Do not fear the Romans. Do not fear the religious authorities who plotted to put Him to death. Do not fear death and the grave. Do not fear the guilt of your sins. They did their worst to Jesus, but it has not defeated Him. It is Jesus who has defeated them. They could not hold Him down. I know you saw him die with your own two eyes. I know saw them place Jesus in

the tomb, but look, He is not here. He is risen. Just as He had taught the disciples when He was on the road. Everything in the Old testament; Jesus the one greater than Moses has provided a greater Exodus from the sins and fear that enslave you. So do not be afraid.

That was the first bit of Good News The angel brought to the Women. They were to **“Go quickly and tell His disciples. He has been raised from the dead.”** This is a time to rejoice.

And women did just that. Sort of. **“They departed from the tomb with fear and great joy.”**

Matthew does not tell us why the women went the tomb that First Easter morning, except to see the tomb. Possibly, to go to the place where Jesus was buried to focus their grief. Also, Mark and Luke report the women went to the tomb to take care of the grim work of properly anointing the body of Jesus to finish the proper burial. But when they get there, there is nobody to anoint. That is the second good news the angel told them. The only body of Jesus they will see is a living body, a resurrected body. A body that was dead, is alive. Look at the stone. Look and the guards. A dead Jesus? He is not here. He is risen. “You will see Him.” No more grim work to be done here.

So, women run away and dropping those things we usually use to fight death. Anointing spices and oils. Maybe a form of our ongoing battle against death. Why fight a battle that has already been won? That is the message that the disciples need to hear too. So, the angel says, go and tell the disciples. He is risen. You will see Him. Go to Galilee and He will meet you there. Yes, the disciples need this message too. They are fighting not with weapons, but with hiding and locked doors, fighting with their guilt, fighting their fear of Jesus’ enemies that they might be next too. They are fighting hopelessness and unbelief. So, they need to hear this good news. The battle against sin, the fear of death, and the devil is over and Jesus has won. He has risen.

It is a message we need to constantly hear and bring to remembrance too.

Why do you still fight for honor and position and status. He is risen. Your baptism assures you a place in the Kingdom of Heaven and your status is an honor as a Child of God.

Why do you still fight sin and guilt locking it all up in your heart and mind. Or denying it or justifying your action. Jesus' cross and resurrection has won the victory over sin, you are forgiven. For our God is a God from whom no secrets are hid.

Why are you still afraid of what others might think of you being a follower of Jesus or His disciple. Afraid to die. The saints considered it an honor to face ridicule from the world just as their Lord did. Jesus said, Do not fear those who can harm the body, but those who can harm the soul."

We need not fight anymore against these and many other things of this world. In Baptism and faith your life is hidden in Christ who is victorious over all the forces of this world.

You have been raised with Christ; you are a new person. That is baptismal language. The tomb is empty, and Christ is Raised from the dead.

St. Paul says, "Set your minds on things that are above, where Christ is. No need to set your minds on the things of this world. They are temporary. Even our tombs. Because of the resurrection and your life in Christ, you will be raised too on the last day when Christ appears, and you will appear with Him in Glory. Then it will be revealed that all those things fought against has already been defeated.

The women did meet the risen Lord on their way to the disciples. And the risen Lord said greetings. Yes, the Lord is alive just as the angel said. The fight is over. They worshiped Jesus. They took hold of His feet.

That is what we have come here to do today. To worship Our risen Lord. We need fight any more, we need not be afraid any more, for the crucified and resurrect Lord is Here among us. We will not take hold of His feet in this worship but in just a few moments will take hold of His Body and Blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion receiving the assurance that everything He has won on the cross in in this meal, forgiveness of, and where there is forgiveness there is salvation and hope.

Then we will depart to go to our homes, with hope and the battle is indeed won. May we go from here as the women did as messengers to those who are still battling a life without hope. The battle is won, Christ has gloriously overcome death and grave. For He is risen. He has Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

May the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.