

## Easter Sunday (A) – Matthew 28:1-10

**Discipleship:** *An Instrument of Life*

**Focus Question:** *This week how might you be an instrument of life?*

### **word of life**

**“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.’”** Matthew 28:5-6 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 28:1-10

The story starts out slowly as the sun emerges from the horizon. The other disciples are not around, but it is Mary Magdalene and Mary who travel to the tomb at dawn. Suddenly an earthquake shakes the land. This is not the first earthquake of the week. A few days earlier at the death of Jesus, the earth shook and rocks tumbled. A centurion guard witnessed these events and confessed, “Truly this man was God’s son!” (Matthew 27:45-54 NRSV)

1. *How do you explain the earthquakes?*
2. *What might Mary Magdalene and Mary have been thinking when they reached the tomb?*

Suddenly, an angel wearing brilliant white descends, rolls back the tomb, and sits on the rock. This is enough to terrify the guards. First, the guards react with trembling before they freeze, immobilized by their fear. The angel speaks to the two women and utters remarkable words: “*do not be afraid. . . he has been raised. . . go quickly . . . tell . . .*” (Matthew 28: 5-7)

Like the guards, the women are terrified; but the good news proclaimed by the angel brings them such great joy that they are compelled to move past their fear into action. Despite their fear, they are able to run to tell others. Despite their lack of understanding, they are able to respond. Despite being ineligible to be a legal witness in a court because of their gender, these women depart as willing witnesses to the risen Christ.

3. *How do you explain the response by the guards?*
4. *Why would God choose to reveal the resurrection to unlikely witnesses?*

The story is not over. Things happen quickly on this Easter morning. Just as the angel appeared suddenly, so does the risen Christ appear to the women. Unlike the immobilized guards, the women respond with purpose and action. They worship Jesus. Simple enough. No

questions. No pondering. They drop to their knees to worship the risen Jesus. Like the angel, Jesus responds with a pastoral word, "Do not be afraid." (Matthew 28:10 NRSV)

5. *How can they not be filled with fear?*
6. *What would it have felt like to hear the words "do not be afraid"?*

How can their minds and hearts not be swirling like a whirlpool? At this point, life makes no sense. These women know Jesus had been crucified and buried. They were first-hand witnesses to the brutal reality of it all, including the finality of the death and burial of Jesus. But now – Jesus has defeated death. That victory over death changes everything once and for all. No wonder Jesus joins the angel to commission the women . . . *go and tell.*

7. *How does the resurrection of Jesus change our lives?*
8. *What does it mean to believe in Easter?*

## **word among us**

Throughout the Lenten season, the theme of the Daily Discipleship has been the Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Take a few minutes to silently pray this prayer, pausing to savor each phrase.

Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy;  
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.  
For it is giving that we receive, it is pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

**Prayer changes people.**

1. *If you have prayed this prayer during the last weeks, what changes have you observed in your own life?*
2. *How else might this prayer change someone who prayed it consistently?*

The prayer concludes with the petition, “it is dying that we are born to eternal life.” That is the Easter promise. Because Jesus Christ died and defeated death, we are promised the same. Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

3. *What does the petition “it is dying that that we are born to eternal life” mean to you?*
4. *Is this petition only referring to physical death at the end of life? How so?*
5. *How do we live our lives differently because we are Easter people?*

The prayer names many human experiences – hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, and sadness. But, the prayer counters each negative with a specific blessing which might be extended by an individual. By the grace of God, a disciple of the risen Christ can be turned into an instrument of peace, love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy.

In addition, God can transform a person from being self-centered and full of self-pity into someone committed to extending consolation, understanding, and love to another person.

6. *How finely tuned are you as a personal instrument of God’s peace?*
7. *Which is the hardest petition for you to pray?*
8. *Which is the easiest petition for you to live?*
9. *Which one petition would you like to adopt for the coming year?*

## **Prayer**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. For it is dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen

## **Dig Deeper**

Acts 10:34-43

## ***last word***

Pray each day this week:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
for it is dying that we are born to eternal life.