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The earth quakes,

An Unearthly bright angel appears from the sky

The huge stone is rolled away

And the armed soldier guards of Jesus' tomb tremble and faint – drop to the ground like dead men.

Easter is ironic.

The dead become alive and the living become as dead.

The angel sees the soldiers in dead faint and says to the women – and to us:

Well, don't *you* be afraid.

Fear not – again, these divine words that interrupt the natural human response to something unexpected, mindboggling, amazing, overwhelming –

Fear not, the angel – messenger of God – says to the women.

Easter is ironic – it always comes as life among the dying.

It always comes as an interruption to fear and worry  
and fretting and anxiety  
and grief and self-pity.

Yes, even yours and mine today

as the schools close for the remainder of the year,

parents wonder how to manage with the children at home all day,

and child care centers wonder if they can stay in business,

as the numbers of COVID-19 cases rise and now all the counties in our Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have at least one case.

Globally, as of yesterday, only a very few African nations have no reported cases of the virus, and even the islands far out in the Pacific are beset by this illness.

Into the anxiety and gloom and doom of coronavirus and climate change that sees our planet as a dying wasteland,

We Christians dare to say – no shout! – Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Because the angel says to the women at the tomb –

*I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has been raised, as he said.*

And to make the women witnesses to this reality, the angel invites them to look inside the tomb to see for themselves.

The stone did not need to be rolled away to let Jesus out, as was the case for Lazarus. Lazarus was not God.

Before the angel arrived,

Jesus had already been raised from the dead.

By the power of the Father and the Spirit, the Son had already vacated the tomb.

How that happened lies within the mystery of God.

The reality is – the tomb is empty – Jesus is raised – as he said.

Easter is an interruption of the way things are – and the fulfillment of God's Word.

Three times, Jesus had said to his disciples: *“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; <sup>19</sup> then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”*

But they did not comprehend what he was saying.

So, they were not expecting his resurrection.

The women went to the tomb expecting to find the soldiers awake and guarding,

expecting to ask them to roll the stone away

Expecting to go inside the tomb to anoint a dead body.

Easter is ironic – the living become as dead and the dead are made alive.

Easter is an interruption of human expectation.

The women had a mission – to anoint their dead friend and master.

It was a purpose they understood,

it was their privilege and duty to perform this act of love and dignity for Jesus.

**But what they experienced interrupted that mission.**

He is not here – there is no body to anoint.

What now?

That's a question we all understand, isn't it?

- We can't go to work – what now?
- We can't go to school – what now?
- We can't go to church – what now?
- We are disabled – what now?
- We are laid off – what now?

Where do we find purpose for our lives now?

How do we understand our mission in this world now?

The women could not complete the mission they started with.

That was a mission to anoint the dead.

**But God gave them a new mission.**

The angel sent them with new purpose:

*go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead*

*So with fear and joy they ran to tell the other disciples.*

Would the others believe them?

Earthquake, fainting soldiers, angels, empty tomb – Wouldn't they think they were crazy?

How would they convince them?

But once again, Easter interrupts human fear and expectation.

On their way, they – literally—run into Jesus himself, in the flesh, alive!

His first words? Fear Not.

**Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!**

And Jesus – whom two witnesses have seen and touched alive – confirms their mission:

Go – tell.

As Easter 2020 interrupts our fear and expectations, this word of Jesus answers our questions of What now?

Go – tell them I am alive.

Fear not – Go—tell them what you have seen and heard – tell them, I am alive.

Go – for some, that may be a far away mission in another country.

For others, it may be just next door.

This year, for many of us, it may be going into cyberspace – on social media and websites, email and Skyping.

**However we go, let us go without fear**

**but always with great joy,**

**to tell others Jesus is risen from the dead.**

Death no longer has any power over him – and through him, it has no more power over us.

Jesus does more than flatten the curve of death – he demolishes it!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Amen

Easter Day A  
12 April 2020  
St. Peter's York/Christ Manchester  
Matthew 28:1-10