

He Is Not Here

Matthew 28:1–10

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Easter begins in a place of grief. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb at dawn, not expecting resurrection, but expecting death to stay where it was left. They go because love still shows up, even when it doesn't know what else to do. That's one of the reasons this passage speaks so clearly to real life. It does not begin with celebration. It begins with sorrow, fear, and what looks like finality.

That matters, because many of us know what it is to walk toward something that feels final. Sometimes it is a death. Sometimes it is a diagnosis, a broken relationship, a deep disappointment, or a season where hope has worn thin. We know what it is to stand in front of something and think, "This is the end. Nothing more can come from this." That is the kind of place Easter enters.

The women arrive at the tomb and everything changes. The earth shakes. The stone is rolled away. The guards are undone. What looked sealed is opened by the power of God. The first thing they hear is not rebuke but comfort: "**Do not be afraid.**" That word still matters. Easter does not shame frightened people. Easter speaks to frightened people. It meets us where we are and tells us that fear does not get the final word.

Then comes the heart of the message: "**He is not here.**" Jesus is not in the tomb because He has been raised. The cross was real. The suffering was real. The death was real. But none of that was final. The empty tomb is God's declaration that death has been defeated and that what looks finished to us is not beyond His power.

What This Text Shows Us

Love still shows up.

The women came because they loved Jesus. They did not come with answers. They came with sorrow. That matters because faithfulness does not always look strong. Sometimes it looks like simply showing up.

God acts where we think the story is over.

The tomb looked final. The stone looked final. The grief looked final. But God was already at work. Easter reminds us that God is not limited by what looks closed to us.

Fear and joy can exist at the same time.

Matthew says the women left the tomb with fear and great joy. That is honest faith. Resurrection does not always erase trembling in a moment. Sometimes joy comes while our hands are still shaking.

Jesus meets people on the way.

The women do not only hear about Jesus from the angel. Jesus Himself meets them on the road. That is still true. Christ meets us not only in sanctuary moments, but in the middle of daily obedience, grief, service, and the next step.

Easter leads to witness.

The women are told to go and tell. Easter is not only something to celebrate. It is something to carry. The good news moves from the tomb into the world.

A Few Things We Need to Notice

The women went to the tomb expecting to mourn, not expecting to rejoice. That tells us the resurrection was not created by human wishful thinking. It broke in on people who were still grieving.

The stone was rolled away, not because Jesus needed help getting out, but so the women could see the tomb was empty. God made visible what He had already done.

The guards, who represented human power and control, became helpless in the presence of God's power. Easter reminds us that empire, fear, violence, and death are not ultimate.

When Jesus tells the women to go tell His brothers, that word "**brothers**" carries grace. These are the disciples who fled. Peter denied Him. They failed Him. Yet the risen Christ still calls them back.

Resurrection includes restoration.

And Jesus says He is going ahead of them to Galilee. That matters deeply. Easter is not only about what happened behind them at the tomb. It is about where Jesus is leading them next. He goes ahead of them, and He goes ahead of us.

What This Means for Us

We live in a world that knows a lot about fear. Fear of loss. Fear of change. Fear of what comes next. Fear that the hardest thing we have faced will define us forever. Easter speaks directly into that fear and says, **“Do not be afraid.”** That does not mean life suddenly becomes easy. It means fear is no longer the truest thing about us.

We also live in a world that treats endings as absolute. Easter tells us to be careful about what we call final. God still works in graves, ruins, disappointments, and places that seem beyond repair. The resurrection does not deny pain. It declares that pain does not get the last word.

This passage also reminds us that Jesus goes ahead of us. Ahead of us into uncertain futures. Ahead of us into healing. Ahead of us into witness. Ahead of us into hard conversations, deep grief, and unknown territory. We do not walk alone into the next chapter. The risen Christ is already there.

Main Truth of the Sermon

Resurrection breaks through fear and finality.

The empty tomb is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of transformed living. Because Jesus is alive, we do not live as people trapped by despair. We live as people who know that grace is stronger than sin, love is stronger than hatred, and life is stronger than death.

Questions to Reflect On

What in your life feels sealed shut right now?

Where have you assumed the story is over?

What fear do you need to hear Jesus speak into today?

What would it look like for you to live this week as someone who believes Christ is alive and goes ahead of you?

Who in your life needs to hear a word of resurrection hope?

Moving Toward the Table

This sermon leads naturally to communion because the risen Christ does not only give us news to hear.

He gives us grace to receive. At the table, we are reminded that the crucified and risen Jesus still meets His people. He still feeds us. He still steadies fearful hearts. He still calls us forward.

So when we come to the table, we do not come pretending we have no fear. We come trusting that Christ is alive. We come believing the tomb is empty. We come knowing He goes ahead of us. And we come ready to be sent back into the world as people who go and tell.

Key Line to Remember

He is not here. The tomb is empty, Christ is alive, and that changes what we call final.