

Easter Sunday  
April 12, 2020  
Matthew 28:1-10

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*Before and After*

Most of us have not yet been *infected* by the coronavirus, but we have all been *affected*. We have suffered the crucifixion of our normal lives--our lives before Covid-19. Many have lost jobs, most have lost income, some have fallen ill either with the virus itself or with other mental or physical maladies. Like the women in the tomb, we have pawed over the grave clothes of what is gone from us; we have remembered wistfully our lives before the virus and mourned the loss of innocence, the death of loved ones and we've grieved the pain and anguish so rife in the world right now.

Though we are indeed fortunate to live in Vermont where we can get outside and walk and watch indomitable spring push through April's stubborn shell, yet still we've been confined, restricted, admonished and left to our florid and stoked imaginations. In oscillating waves of panic and humble bewilderment we wonder what our lives will be like *after* this. We know what *before* looked like, but we don't know what after will be.

Or do we?

Let's go back to this story and see what it might teach us about our situation today. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary rush to the tomb. Do they want to keep vigil? To see his body? To weep? We're not told what their intention or expectations were. What we are told is that an angel of the Lord miraculously appeared, that his arrival wrenched the fabric of the world causing an earthquake and making him glow like lightening as he rolled the stone from the tomb.

The angel then calmly speaks to the women saying in effect, "I know why you're here. Go on see if you can find what you've lost. Good luck with that." He was indulgent of their frenzy and yet so apparently blasé that we're told he just sat on the stone. What did he do? Pick his teeth? Check his phone? Whistle a tune? What he said to them is a message we need so desperately right now: "Do not be afraid. The risen Christ has gone ahead of you, there you will see him."

We've certainly experienced an earthquake. In seismic jolts our lives have been altered, our normal routines upended. For the most part we're taking it day by day trying to resist imagining what the future holds for us, weeks and months from now. By mandate and willing compliance, we're living more in the present than perhaps we ever have before. And I bet you've seen an angel here and there. Has there been someone who's lightened the moment, eased your spirit and made you dare to feel hopeful? What the angel in the story says is vitally important for us at this moment. The risen Christ is out there in the future, alive after the earthquake, the pandemic, after the crucifixion, alive and waiting for you.

But when is "after?" Surely it is not when this is all over because that will likely be awhile. After is actually now. The moment we understood that the threat was frighteningly real, as soon as we went inside, closed the door and glanced around at our still house or wide-eyed children, as soon as we stopped putting gas in our cars every week, after was born. In lives that have seemed chaotic or lonely, destroyed or oddly peaceful, Christ was already present; the resurrection had occurred. Easter is not about proof, it's about trust. Listen to your angels, trust in God.

I heard a story recently that I'd like to share with you. As you know, Governor Cuomo of New York--nowadays called "the Luv Gov"-- continues to plea for assistance. One thing he's requested is that medical professionals living somewhere not overwhelmed by the coronavirus consider coming the New York City to help. In March about twenty licensed healthcare workers from Atlanta Georgia packed their bags and answered the call. Among them was Letha Love. Nurse Love left her two kids with her aunt and went to help. She misses them, they certainly miss her and worry about her, but she is certain that she is where she needs to be right now, though admittedly she's not sure how long she can stay given how overwhelming it is. When asked about the tragic situation of so many patients dying without their loved ones with them, she said, "We're there. There's doctors there. There's nurses there. They're not suffering alone. The next best thing is us. We are taking care of them."

Nurse Love is alive and well, caring for you too this day, because Christ is always alive in love. When we trust that love is imbedded in our created world, that it is in some unfathomable way who we are, then trusting in *after* is easy. Because Christ is already there in

every kind and loving gesture, in every smile shared or tear shed. May we of tender hearts walk into the morrow quietly, trusting in the One who awaits us with open arms.

Grace and Peace.