

Easter Day 2020

Matthew 28:1-10

If you have ever been afraid,  
This story is for you.

If you have ever felt trapped,  
This story is for you.

If the future looks bleak,  
This story is for you.

On this Easter morning,  
The story of Jesus rising to life is for you.  
Let the story gather you in,  
Let the story enter your heart,  
Let the story set you free.

In some quiet corner of the world,  
There may be someone  
Whose equanimity is unshaken  
As plague circles the globe,  
As systems are strained to the breaking point,  
As old hostilities flare  
And new chasms open.

But for most of us,  
This is a time of fear,  
Of isolation,  
Of anger and sorrow  
And genuine, heartbreaking questions.  
Will we see our loved ones again?  
Will our economy survive?  
Will we have a free and fair election?  
What will happen to the most vulnerable among us –  
The unsheltered,  
those who are not safe in their own homes,  
those without access to clean water,  
food, health care?  
What will happen?  
Who will lead us out of the confusion?  
How are we called to act?

If you wonder about any of these things,  
This story is for you.

This story of hope beyond hope,  
of light renewing itself from within darkness  
This story of love trampling down death,  
Is the story for now.

So come,  
Follow the women who go this morning  
To see the tomb.

Why are they going,  
When the tomb is sealed,  
And a guard is set?

They go, yes, because they are sorrowful,  
But they go, also,  
Because they have a profound sense  
That things are not right.  
They go because there is a great gap in their souls.  
They have been prevented from doing  
What they know is right.

Just as now, in this time of trouble,  
So many among us are kept from those we love,  
Even at the moment of death,  
So they have not been able to tend to Jesus  
As custom directs,  
As religion requires,  
As their hearts yearn to do.  
There is a terrible tension for them,  
And they must try to do what they can.  
They go to the tomb.

And there the story turns upside down.  
Earthquake,  
Lightning,  
Strong men fainting dead away.  
And the angel,  
Saying –  
yes, what the angel always says –  
Don't be afraid.

Don't be afraid –  
But a fearful thing has happened.  
The power of God  
Has awakened in the darkness of the tomb

And burst it apart.  
Nothing can stop it.

Love is stronger than death.  
This is the truth that calls light into being,  
Creates a good world out of empty chaos.  
This truth stands before us on Easter morning  
In the person of Jesus of Nazareth,  
Alive.

Nothing can stop Jesus  
From bringing love back to life.

No disease brought by a novel coronavirus  
can stop him.  
No spectacular failure of leadership  
Can stop him.  
No hiding in dark corners  
Can stop him.

He will enter our souls if we let him.  
He will enliven the distances between us  
If we let him.  
He will go where we cannot,  
To the lonely deathbeds  
And the open graves  
Close packed with coffins  
And the cold beds of those who have no homes.

Nothing can stop him  
From bringing life with him  
When he breaks in upon us.

He is here with us now,  
As he was, suddenly,  
With the women who had gone to see him dead.  
They went to care for his body;  
They discovered a mystery  
That is the embodiment of love.

So often, in other years,  
We have left the story there,  
With the revelation of this great mystery –  
Love overpowers death.

But today,

In this time of confusion and uncertainty,  
There is an invitation –  
An invitation to look beyond the revelation  
to the end of the story,  
Which is another beginning.

The story ends with a mission,  
And a promise.

The women who have seen the risen Lord  
Are charged with a sacred task –  
A task far greater and more sacred than the one they came to do.  
They must tell the news,  
And point the way.

Go, says Jesus, tell my friends to go to Galilee,  
There they will see me.

Can you see the bright light,  
Hear him greeting you,  
On this Easter morning?

The world has gone dark.  
Do you doubt,  
As the chaos closes in?  
Do you wonder if Christ can really be alive?

Don't be afraid –  
Even if you are filled with doubt,  
This story is for you.

He goes on ahead of you –  
And you will see him.

The world has gone dark.  
Even as the chaos closes in,  
Do you see the risen Christ,  
Coming to meet you with a greeting?  
Don't be afraid –  
This story is for you.  
It is for you to hold the good news close,  
And share in far and wide.

Can we see him,  
Can we proclaim the good news,  
On this Easter morning

In the midst of plague?

The women at the empty tomb see him now;  
Others will see him soon, but not quite yet.  
The same is true for us.

For some, the wonder and the mystery is now.

And for some, though it is already true,  
It is not yet here.  
There is still a journey.

He is not here, says the angel.  
He is going before us.  
We will see him.  
That is the promise, always.

But today?  
Or after another journey?

For some few –  
Courageous,  
Maybe mystics,  
Maybe pure of heart,  
For some,  
The announcement that Christ is alive is for right now.  
Jesus, alive, is right here.

For others,  
The truth and power of the resurrection  
Are waiting up ahead.  
Even if we trust the good news,  
There is a journey before we see him.

He is going on ahead of us,  
And if we follow,  
We will find him.

He is alive;  
Nothing can kill him now.

You may not see him yet,  
And the journey may be hard.

But you can trust this good news:  
He is here.

He is love,  
Springing up all around us,  
No matter what.

This is the truth of Easter.  
There is no dark place love will not enter,  
There is no fear love will not cast out,  
There is no death that can kill love.  
Jesus, alive, embodies that truth.

You can trust this,  
Until you see him face to face,  
Touch his living flesh,  
And follow him on the way.