

*When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

I'll bet they wish they could do it over again. Knowing what they know now, I'll bet Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome wish they could have a second try at Easter morning. No sadness or perplexity, they would rush to the tomb, joy to see that stone rolled away. As fast as they could they would go inside, to hear the messenger of God speak the words, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you."

Could they do it all over again now, I'm sure that this time they would not go out and flee from the tomb, fleeing because trembling and astonishment had come upon them, saying nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

No, this time they would skip and dance all the way to the place where the disciples were. The very first people privileged to tell this good and glorious news: "Jesus Christ, the crucified one is alive. Death is not as strong as the Father's love. He is alive."

And they would not stop there; they would go from person to person, from house to house with the good news of Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. If they had only known then what they know now, but then trembling and astonishment and fear had kept them silent.

But this side of the grave, it is different, isn't it. We hear Jesus say, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

If I were to ask you, "Do you believe in Jesus?" Most of you would say, "Yes, I believe. I believe that because Jesus lives I shall live. I believe that death shall not be able to

separate me from God's love in Jesus Christ. I believe that when death grabs hold of me that through Jesus Christ God shall free me and make me alive once more.”

But for most all of us, between this moment and the moment when our eyes shall open to see the face of Jesus, we are a lot like those women on Easter morning – uncertain - afraid. Most of the time, like them we say nothing to anyone about our Lord. And walk through life trembling from time to time.

Like when we come along the road to Jericho, and see the beaten man in the ditch. And we are in a hurry, late for an appointment. Or we are just afraid to get involved - afraid the robbers might still be hanging around and get us too. Or afraid that once we give our time to the man in the ditch he'll need more than we can spare. So when people we know get cancer, or lose their spouse, or their job, after a time we just stay away, afraid of what it may cost us to be a friend, a Good Samaritan to them.

Or maybe fear keeps us lying awake at night. What will happen to us, we worry, or our children? Will thieves break in, will sickness steal time and life from us? Will I fail?

Someday we are going to look back, regretting every moment that fear, rather than faith ruled our hearts. Someday when our resurrected lives are the proof of the truth of God's promises in Jesus Christ, we'll ask ourselves, “Why didn't I leap into that pool of faith? Why did I enter so tentatively, like a swimmer inching little by little into the cold water?”

God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead that his people might live in faith. Fear and death already do enough damage to this world without you and I letting our hearts be ruled by them. As you believe in Jesus Christ, all his love, all his giving and caring and power to make people new is in you. He is in you to make all things new.

Today I take the place of the man in the tomb, a man in a white robe: Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, is risen from the dead. Do not leave here afraid, but go forth into the world and into your life trusting in him. Not poverty nor sickness nor hunger nor loss, not suffering nor pain nor death itself, will be able to keep God from giving you the life Jesus now lives. Let the joy that God has given you in Jesus Christ rule over your thoughts and words and deeds, until you too, shall live eternally with your God.