

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.-

The stone was huge, heavy. Maybe you know the feeling of putting all your weight against something, straining with all your being and nothing happens, it will not budge.

Like a mother searching for a child who has died – praying - pleading, the listening for the voice that is silenced. Her grief is a great stone, huge and heavy, she cannot move it aside.

Or like the forgiveness that our mind says should be in our heart but is not. What he did to you leaves a wound deep in your soul. The anger and the bitterness and the hurt are a great stone blocking the way to a new beginning.

Or the fear rising like a flood within - higher and higher until it overflows the banks of your words, your deeds, and can be seen by all - a stone so heavy that you cannot move it.

Very early the first day of the week, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?".

They should have gone home then. No one will be there to roll away the stone, why should we waste our steps and our time?

Nothing will ever change.

People will kill people in wars.

Blacks will hate whites - whites blacks.

Drunks will beat their children.

Politicians will be dishonest.

Everyone will be only looking out for old number one.

Best not to hope, not to believe anything could ever be different. Best to go home until there is someone stronger to come to the tomb to roll away the stone.

But those foolish women kept on walking.

When they looked up, they saw that the stone which was very large had already been rolled back.

When they looked up, there is a hint of something in these words. In our realism we are looking down, seeing all that is humanly possible. We search for what is in my own strength. But on that Easter morning the women looked up and the stone was rolled away.

They encounter their first surprise while disciples were still sleeping.

As they entered the tomb they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

Was this the same young man they had seen the night of Jesus' arrest, running away naked? Held in the grasp of a soldier, nearly arrested with Jesus, leaving his clothes behind, running to escape the fate of his Lord. Could they in their looking up see what is hidden from our realistic gaze, the young man given new clothing, a robe of white, and a courageous word to speak?

"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. But 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."

How great a stone has now been rolled away! Not simply a stone that is greater than a few women's strength, but the stone that is the barrier to all of life, the stone of death.

Who will roll away the stone that brings the grief, the stone that lends power to all fear, the stone that says the hurts we suffer can never be escaped? Who will roll away death? The young man testified Jesus has been raised.

The stone is rolled away.

God has strength to roll away the stone.

Not only Jesus but we were trapped in that tomb. For if the grave is our end then death is our Lord. And no one can ever roll away the stone of a mother's grief. No one can ever free us from fear; no one can ever forgive how another robs them in living.

All violence and force, all wars and crime, have power if the tomb is our end. But when God rolled away the stone, and Jesus was raised we all were freed from the tomb. Look up! God will have every last word, not crosses, not tears, not fears.

Look up! But the women went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

How could they be silent? Afraid?

How can we? How can we believe that the power of violence and the power of bullets and bombs are more to be feared and trusted than the word of our Lord? How can we live as if the tomb is still sealed, we trapped by death? How can we be silent when they complain how awful it is, how hopeless it is, how helpless we are? How can we keep on looking down when God has raised Jesus?

Each and every one of us is the young man, stripped naked, running away. Yet through faith in Jesus God clothes us with a white robe, the purity of Christ, the life of Christ. And God puts words in our mouths, the word about Jesus. God give us grace to speak the word, "He is risen!" God give us grace to look up, to focus our eyes and our hearts on Christ and to know that every stone will be rolled away.

God will have every final word; that word is life from the dead. He is risen! You will be raised.