

EASTER ANGELS
Rev. Lawrence Baldrige
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Mark 16 NIV

The Resurrection

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' "

⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

All four gospel writers give witness to the Resurrection of Jesus, and all four do it in their own distinct, original, way. They speak with absolute certainty that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was fact not fiction, that His body, which was dead, was no longer in the tomb, that instead of searching for Him there, He was Living in a way they could not understand. At His own choosing, Jesus would find them and reveal Himself to them. Their stories are all different, which adds authenticity to the story. If they were all the same in every detail we would know that the writers conspired to make up a story that was, perhaps, false. In a court of law, for example, no two witnesses express their eyewitness account in the same way.

All the Gospel writers also write about Supernatural Beings, Angels, who both accompanied and heralded this momentous event. Interestingly enough, we find these Angels both in the Advent, or birth of Jesus, and in this time of His Resurrection. During His birth they heralded this event in praise and song. In this resurrection event the Angels had a different ministry: They were there to serve and to explain.

In a real sense, we are angels too, for the word in the Greek for angel is *angelos*, and it simply means *messenger*. While the Easter Angels were supernatural, we, in essence, are to do the work of the angels too. We are to become Easter Angels. An Angel Rolled Back the Stone. Like that angel, we are to roll back the stones so that others will know the Truth of the Resurrection.

I. THE ANGELS PROCLAIMED THE RISEN CHRIST.

NIV Matt 28:5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

A. Proclamation in Word.

The proclamation of the Angel was, “He is not here; he has risen...!” That fact must have seemed strange indeed to the women on that early resurrection morning. They expected a closed tomb and a dead Jesus. Before sunrise, carrying their spices, they had come to anoint the body of Jesus, not to hear the startling words, “He has risen!” Their hopes had been dashed at Calvary on that Friday; they were simply coming out of love for their departed Master, and out of their duty for the dead. “Who is this bright being,” they must have thought—“Who is this bright being telling us our Master lives?” But this was their unmistakable message. Luke writes in ch 24:5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.”NIV

They were seeking the dead, not the living. They were expecting to find the dead. Their only question was, “How in the world will we roll the stone from the tomb?” Now, the stone was rolled back, the tomb did not contain the body of Jesus, but Angels were there, at the head and the foot where He had been laid. More, these angels were preaching to them the Resurrection of Jesus. He Lives! He has risen!

When we proclaim the Resurrection, we too are Easter Angels. We too are messengers of the Living Christ. We too must preach with our weak words the message of the powerful Gospel of the Resurrection. And we are assured that word will not return without accomplishing what the Father intends for it to accomplish.

Our message is the historic message of the early Christians. In Acts 4:2, Peter and John were imprisoned because the Sanhedrin Court Members “were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” In 1Cor 15 Paul tells the Corinthians and us that if there is no resurrection of the dead our faith is vain and our preaching is vain. In Acts 4:33 we are told that the apostles testified with “great power continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.” We proclaim victory! We proclaim Resurrection! In 1 Pet. 1:3 this preaching is called a “Living Hope.”

Be an Easter Angel and tell someone about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ today; and tell them that if they will repent and believe they too can have that Living Hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for those who believe.

B. Proclamation in Deeds.

We must of course back up our Gospel with good works. Paul reminds us, “We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. That means the Living Christ must live through us. People must see a resurrected life before they can believe in the Resurrected Christ. A man joined his local church one day after many years of living without Christ. The pastor asked him what it was he or someone else had said that caused him to give his life to the Lord. The man answered, “It wasn’t what anyone said. It was what my Christian mother did. I could never get away from her Godly life.”

Dr. Mackey, the Scottish M.D., who wrote the song “REVIVE US AGAIN” tells how he came to Christ after an ungodly life. His mother had given him a Bible and had written within it a verse for him. During his medical studies he needed some money and sold the Bible for a small sum. He tells in his journal that a man had fallen from a roof

and was near death. He visited the man each day till he died. The man loved The Book he had. Before he died he asked that his landlady bring The Book to him. He read it, and then, when he could no longer read it, placed it under his cover. Dr. Mackey was to be present at the event of his will. The woman there mentioned The Book. Dr. Mackey looked at it, and, to his surprise, it was his Bible that he had sold years earlier. There he found the verse his godly mother had written for him. This very thing brought him to find the Living Christ, and live the rest of his life as a disciple. His mother's influence and the Bible she had given her wayward son finally led this son to Jesus. She was an Easter Angel.

II. THE ANGELS PROCLAIMED THE RESURRECTION; THEN THE ANGELS ENCOURAGED THE DISPIRITED AND FRIGHTENED DISCIPLES.

A. The Need for Encouragement.

We find these words in John 20: 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

The angels are trying to console Mary. Then in Marks Gospel they say to Mary, "Don't be afraid!" The Angel seemed to have the ministry of encouragement. And what a ministry that is. The Bible says, "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)." NIV Acts 4:36. What a compliment the apostles paid to Joseph of Cyprus. They called him Barnabas, or, Son of Encouragement. No greater ministry than that of encouragement! One of my former high school English teachers was seated in the congregation when I preached one of my first sermons. I must have been pretty awful—but not to her. She gave me great encouragement, despite my poor grammar and my shallowness. I shall never forget that encouragement. It was to me as 'apples of gold in a basket of silver.' Her word was spoken in a needed season, and how good it was.

In Acts 13, during Paul's first missionary journey, the Apostle and his group came from Perga to Pisidian Antioch and on the Sabbath entered the synagogue and sat down. When the Law and Prophets were read, the rulers sent word to them, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak." vs. 15. We need to be Easter Angels and to be encouragers. The people are truly hungry for a word of encouragement from the man of God, from the woman of God, from the child of God. During the week most people walk upon the edge of despair. We need to encourage them and to give them hope.

Paul had his own problems, but he always gave encouragement. He was indeed an Easter Angel. Then in Acts 20:1-3, we find these words: ¹"When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia. ²He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, ³where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia." Paul had his own problem, but he never forgot to give encouragement to those who heard him. Paul was an Easter Angel. Listen to his words to

the Thessalonians: 2 Thessalonians 2:16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Encouragement gives us the hope that we need to live in this strange and sinful world.

B. Encouragement Gives Hope.

In His last week before the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus saw that His words of His impending death was causing despair to his disciples. So He said, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also. And where I go and the way you know. (Thomas doubted, and said,) "Lord, we know not where you are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jn. 14.

Encouragement must end in Hope, for through Hope 'the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which He has given unto us.' Be an Easter Angel and give encouragement and hope to others.

III. THE EASTER ANGEL REMINDED THE CHRISTIANS OF A MOST IMPORTANT MEETING BETWEEN THEM AND THE RISEN CHRIST.

A. Meeting Christ in Judea.

In Matthew and Mark the angel reminds the disciples that they have a very important meeting with Jesus, in Galilee.

But they would also meet the Risen Christ in Judea. He appeared the next Sunday to the Apostles in the Upper Room. Thomas was not there, and didn't believe them when they said that they had seen the Lord. He boasted, "Before I will believe, I will have to put my fingers into the wounds of His hands, and thrust my hand into His side." The next Sunday, the doors being closed, Jesus entered the Upper Room and confronted Thomas. Thomas simply cried out in worship, "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus also appeared to two disciples travelling to Emmaeus. Entering into conversation with them, He opened their hearts to the Word of God. They recognized Him in the breaking of the bread. And they said in amazement, "Did not our hearts burn within us!"

Christ can meet us anywhere. And whenever He confronts us He reminds us that He is Lord and God. Whenever we meet Him, our hearts burn within us, and we cry with Wesley that are hearts are "strangely warm." Where Jesus dwells, there dwells the power of the Holy Spirit, and the warmth of the hearth of God the Father.

B. Meeting Christ in Galilee.

It was at Galilee that the angels told the disciples that they must meet Jesus. Mt. 28:7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Later Jesus appeared to them on the mountain of Galilee. The Bible says:

Mt. 28:18 Then Jesus came to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end." (Of the Age).

If I am an Easter Angel I must meet with Jesus and accept the Great Commission as my own commission in life. I have realized anew just what this means. It means that if I follow His will, He, the Risen Christ, will be with me to the very ends of the earth, to the very end of my life here on earth. The condition of the promise is to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, to teach them Christ's Will and Word. So doing I will experience daily the Presence of the Living Christ who burns the heart with Love.

Let me share a personal experience. Nearly three years ago I was preaching in a Gypsy Village in Romania, not far from Bucharest. The church was a large piece of canvas, tied to a small village home, under which sat about 100 or so adults, for the children had gone into a field for Bible Study and games. I preached about the Resurrection. It was very difficult, for I had to depend on an interpreter, and the wind was blowing hard and cold, though it was summer, and I could not even use my Bible and had to give it to a worshipper nearby to hold for me. I did the best I could, and I'm sure my Interpreter did also. At the end of the sermon I gave the invitation. At least two thirds of the people there came forward giving their lives to Jesus. I had never experienced anything like this. And I wondered why and how this had happened. I knew it wasn't the sermon. It must have been something else. Now I know what it was. Jesus said, "Go!—And Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Jesus was simply living up to His promise. He was there with me, and somehow He was there revealing Himself to those very poor, yet very good people who patiently listened to me and my interpreter. They saw the Living Lord! Jesus was there with them and with me, keeping His promises, as He always does. I was simply trying to be an Easter Angel.

We are all called to be Easter Angels. We are commanded to roll back the stone for others in this world. That means that like the angels we will proclaim the Resurrection. He is not here, He is risen! To be Easter Angels is also to give Encouragement to others who need our words of encouragement. The world is dark. Light is dying in the West. But we have the Light of Life to live and to give. We are to give them 'apples of gold in baskets of silver. As Easter Angels we are also to remind them of their meeting with Jesus, which can happen anywhere. But we are to remind them about that most important meeting on a mountain in Galilee. At that summit conference, Jesus commanded and commissioned the disciples to go into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature, and then He promised "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." God wants you to be an Easter Angel. Will you serve Him according to His Word? If you will, He will be with you always, forever!