

"What's In It For Me?"

Matthew 28:1-10

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Matthew 28:1-10

¹After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Prayer.

Pilate's guards, professional Roman soldiers, stood watch.
A garrison with rotating sentries,
a camp fire and a pot for cooking suspended over the fire,
tents offered modest protection from the morning dew.
Soldiers were posted at the request of the Chief Priests;
they undoubtedly welcomed the pre-dawn light.
Since Friday night they stood guard at the door of the stone sealed tomb,
lest His body be stolen
by souvenir hunters,
by grave robbers,
by revolutionary zealots.
Sunday morning was dawning
and Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.
What, with guards and a solid rock door, there wouldn't be much to see.
Yet, still they came.

The earth shook underfoot.
An angel of the Lord,
a male it is reported;
An angel dressed in white, white as snow,
and looking like lightning,
descended from heaven
right before their eyes.

He rolled back the stone door
and he climbed on top of it to sit.
There was no fight, no quarrel, no skirmish.
The soldiers may have been prepared to fight with Peter,
but they weren't prepared for this.
Fear and panic overtook them;
they shook and passed out cold
like cord wood in the wood pile.
Afterwards they were paid money to lie about their incompetence
“just tell them that you were asleep when they came and stole his body.”

Like a Leprecon perched on the Blarney Stone
the angel sat and began to speak.
The angel knew the women's fear.
“Do not be afraid;” he assured them.
“Do not be afraid” were words that would have been familiar to Mary.
The angel knew the women's desire.
He knew whom they sought.
“He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.”
He is raised as he said.
The body had been gone before the stone door was rolled away.

The angel only opened the door for the benefit of the witnesses.
“Come and see, then go and tell,” the angel commanded.
Tell them
“He has been raised from the dead.”
Tell them
“He is going ahead of you to Galilee.”
“Come and see, then go and tell,” the angel commanded.

The women obeyed just as they were told.
They went with an interesting mixture of fear and joy.
Just as quick as they went
He suddenly stopped them with “Greetings!”
They looked,
probably two or three times
shaking the cobwebs and rapidly blinking.
They held His feet,
and they worshiped Him.

They looked, they held, and they worshiped.

It is a simple formula. It didn't take a whole lot of faith
with him standing right in front of you.

Jesus was dead, but is now alive.

It is the message of this Easter day.

QED the mathematician would conclude,

"that which was to be demonstrated."

("quod erat demonstrandum" -if you have to know!)

Jesus had died, and now he is risen.

For two thousand years we've been proclaiming this fact.

For fifty generations, Christians have been passing down this witness.

This testimony has been as common as our baptismal waters,

as longstanding as Christianity,

as continuous as the ranks of Saints and apostolic succession,

as self-evident as the Declaration of Independence,

as true as the sky is blue.

Jesus had died, and now he is risen.

There isn't a corner of the globe today where this light hasn't shined.

Nearly 2 billion – that's a "B" for billion –

Nearly 2 billion Christians are united this Easter Day

Celebrating the fact that

Jesus had died, and now he is risen.

"So, what's the big deal?" the cynic asks.

"What's in it for me?"

In a loveless world

filled with liars and false promises

fake politicians, hypocritical preachers, and identity thieving computer hackers;

in a world consumed by darkness and evil personified

that will hate you, hit you, hurt you, take your last dime, and leave you in the gutter for
dead;

in a world filled with survival of the fittest

single elimination

dog eat dog

and win at all costs ...

... we are thrown a life line.
... we are invited to journey by a road less traveled.
... we are invited to meet the only one -
the only one -
who can truly save us.
For we are offered the Savior,
Jesus,
raised from the dead
willing to share the journey with us
offering to us fully-shared participation in everlasting peace,
and
the gift of eternal life.

If you want to be left alone in the belief that this is all that life will ever have to offer
work hard
play hard
buy everything you can
consume as much as possible
and everyone else be damned;
then, well, God bless you.
You don't have to catch His life line.

But if you are willing to make a change
take a chance;
if you are able to mix some *faith* with *hope*,
and shake together a little pinch of *vision*
for what God's possibilities might hold;
then reach out and grab His life line.
Jesus is throwing it for you to catch.
Hold on to his feet.
Look up and see His face.
Come with me.
Let us walk together with Him
by another road
a road less traveled.
Shake your head clear
Wake up to the fact
that Jesus Christ has risen.
Jesus Christ is risen, indeed.
Alleluia! Amen.