

“No Time for Fear”
Easter Day, April 5, 2026
Scripture: Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

Among the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there are no less than ten different accounts of Jesus’ resurrection. The details are all different, no two stories sound the same. I can’t help but wonder why that is. I think it’s because this is such a bizarre event, so earth-shattering, that it’s hard to wrap our minds around it. The different ways of talking about Jesus’ resurrection could be a recognition that there are no words to pin down exactly what happened and what it means.

Yet even though we have all these different stories, there are certain elements found in all of them. The most obvious, of course, is they all start with the women around Jesus being the first to discover it. Every story begins with the women going to the tomb, finding it empty and being assigned the task of telling the others. The first apostles, the first messengers of the good news, are the women. In a deeply patriarchal society where the testimony of women was often ignored or dismissed, putting this message in their hands is a revolutionary act.

We forget, I think, just how powerful these stories really are. We prefer to tame them. So we gloss over them in our worship or reduce them to hymns and litanies. We don’t want to give them the space they need to mold our thinking about the world and our place in it. If we did that, if we really allowed ourselves to engage these stories fully, we’d realize that overturning social relationships is a central feature of the gospel. It’s not just a byproduct, some happy accident, it is the heart of its message. We cannot embrace the gospel without changing the fundamental relationships between men and women, between rich and poor, between privileged and neglected.

Another element all these stories have in common, that may be a reflection of the power they hold, is fear. The soldiers guarding the tomb faint from fear. They can’t stand up to what’s happening. But the women are afraid at first, too. In Luke’s version we’re told they’re terrified. In Mark’s they run away in fear and say nothing to anyone. In this version from Matthew the two Marys are afraid, but also filled with joy.

They’re told by the angel and later by Jesus, “Don’t be afraid.” But let’s face it, if you’re faced with something this bizarre, this mind-altering, you’re going to be afraid. First because it means everything you have always assumed about how the world works is invalid. When a person dies, they’re not supposed to come back, no matter how much we might wish they would. But second because by invalidating one unalterable reality, everything else is now up for grabs, too.

One thing resurrection teaches us is the way things are is not how they must be. Resurrection opens up possibilities for us we could never imagine before. We live in a world that wants desperately for us to accept we are powerless to change things. Governments, financial institutions, courts, politicians, they all want us to believe we must accept their vision of what’s possible and live with whatever injustices or disparities or inequalities they deem are necessary.

Resurrection is a denial of the world's power. And for those of us who claim resurrection, who want to reveal God's power over a death-infested world, this is no time for fear.

When the writer of Colossians says, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God," they're saying we are no longer bound to a life we did not choose. We are no longer subject to the limitations of an earth-bound existence. So we can let go of all the social divisions we've been taught are required of us. We can cross boundaries of ethnicity and religion and gender and class and can see the risen Christ all around us. And because our life is now joined with Christ and hidden, we have nothing to fear. Christ is risen and we are risen with him.

The powers of the world don't understand that. There will always be elements that want to guard against the possibility of resurrection. Whenever people stand alongside those the world's powers consider unworthy there will be resistance; there'll be ridicule and hostility. But this is no time for fear. We have the power of resurrection to inspire us and give us hope. Anything the world can do to divide and suppress is already overcome. Life wins over death. Love wins over hate. Every time, without exception.

In the end, that's the message the women carry from the tomb. Christ is risen! The power of death is destroyed for good. That's the message we're called to take from the tombs of our own lives. We're called to roll back the stone that has closed on us and show the world Christ is alive. Alive in us. So, don't give in to fear. Be bold in announcing the good news. Be joyful even when things are a little scary. The powers of hate and division and fear will not win. God wins. Love and compassion and generosity win. Tell the world—show the world—Christ is alive! Alleluia!

Amen