

Sermon for April 16, 2017

Easter Sunday

"All Shook Up"

Matthew 28:1-10

Jesus' mother Mary and Mary Magdalene were all shook up Easter morning. They had believed in Jesus. Jesus' mother had believed when the angel Gabriel came to tell her that she would bear a son who would be the messiah. She had believed when the shepherds and wise men came to worship him. Mary Magdalene had also believed. She had been possessed by demons who tortured her soul. Jesus had freed her of that emotional and spiritual torment that she had lived in. He had given her the Joy of knowing the Heavenly Father's love.

Then he had died. How could the one who brought others back to life die? Jesus was the Messiah the Savior sent from God. Who would save them now that he was dead? It was emotionally devastating.

The disciples I am sure were just as shook up. It was bad enough that he died, but the way he died. Like a common thief, publicly humiliated and degraded. Jesus had calmed the raging sea before their eyes, but a sea of hatred had overcome him. Jesus was supposed to save them from the oppression of Rome and now Rome had killed him.

Still shaken by the events of the previous Friday, Mary and Mary Magdalene began to walk to the tomb to pay their respects to the dearly departed. At this point God decided to shake things up a little. Suddenly there was an earthquake and the ground shook. This happened because an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, and the angel had rolled the stone away from the tomb. The world was shaken by this act.

When the angel appeared in its bright raiment the guards trembled. They shook with fear. Those strong soldiers, comrades of the ones who had nailed Jesus to the cross, now cowered in fear. Matthew says they became like dead men. I suppose he means that they fainted. But Matthew has chosen his words carefully. The one who had been dead, Jesus, was now alive, and the ones who had killed him were like dead men. And God shook things up turning the powers of this world on their heads.

Quickly the angel reassured the women. "Don't be afraid, I know you come looking for Jesus, but he is not here. He has risen, just as he said. Go tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee"

The women were still shaken, but now they were also joyful. Just as the angel had told them, they went to tell the disciples. They may not have fully believed, but they still went. As they went they came face to face with the reality of the resurrection. And Jesus said, "Go tell the followers to go to Galilee and they will see me too."

Easter is all about God shaking up the current order of things to create a new order. As Matthew tells the story, Easter started with an earthquake. An earthquake

that turned the world as we know it upside down. No longer was death the end. For those who followed Christ it was a new beginning. The tomb became a womb bringing forth new life.

But this was no mere earthquake that rocked physical structures. It also rocked and toppled principalities and powers. Those who thought they had triumphed over God's Messiah were shaken. Rome had failed to hold Christ down. They had tried to nail him down. They had tried to shut him up with guards and a stone. But he still rose triumphantly. Even the powers of darkness and death could not triumph over Christ.

This was also a life quake. It shook people to the soul. Those who had chosen death were now like dead men. But those who had chosen life in Christ were celebrating the resurrection. God's life quake had given new life and hope to faithful people who moments before had been mourning the dead.

Does your life need a divine earthquake; a life quake? Are there things that need to be shaken out of place? Maybe attitudes of complacency. Maybe structures of sin and selfishness. Maybe something other than Christ needs to be shaken from the throne of your heart.

Maybe your whole world needs to be shaken and turned upside down. Do you live in a world of darkness that needs some light? Like the disciples, are you mourning in a state of hopelessness? Do you need something to turn your deadness into life?

Jesus the Christ is a mover and shaker. He takes the deadness of our lives and makes it alive again. He turns death into life, darkness into light, cries of mourning into shouts of joy. Come to Christ, and let the resurrection shake your world. Let Christ shake you to your very heart and soul.

Actually I believe we all need to be shaken up a little. And the Good News of the resurrection is God's way of doing that. If we are to accept the rule of Christ in our hearts, we need someone to shake the power of sin out of us. We are not strong enough to topple the powers of darkness alone. We need a deliverer who is strong enough. Christ overcame the power of Rome and the power of the Devil himself and he can conquer the evil that tortures our minds and souls.

If we are to accept the eternal life that God offers us in Christ, we need to dislodge the death that dwells within us. Oh we can extend life, maybe we can even put people in suspended animation. But immortality is medically impossible. Despite the advances of modern medicine, doctors cannot extend life indefinitely. Death has the upper hand over us. But Jesus has conquered death, and he can raise us up to new life also.

Ask Christ to shake up your life this Easter. Then with new life and a renewed soul run with joy to tell the others. There are people who are still in the darkness of death. Tell them that there is life in Christ. Tell them that Jesus can shake up their lives too and give them eternal life.