

## **“Don’t be Afraid. Go and Tell.”**

**Prayer of Illumination:** Prepare our hearts, O Lord, to accept your word. Silence in us any voice but your own; that, hearing, we may also obey your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Worship Book, 1970, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

**Scripture Readings:** Matthew 28:1-10; Romans 6:1-11

### **Devotion:**

The one thing I noticed in reading Scripture (Old and New Testaments) is the saying, “Don’t be afraid.” This particular saying occurs twice in the Gospel of Matthew’s Easter story. Both the angel of the Lord, and Jesus Christ tell the two women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, “Do not to be afraid.” I couldn’t blame the two women for being afraid in seeing an angel, an empty tomb, and a dead man walking. I know I would be very afraid.

And yet, while the women were experiencing great fear they were also experiencing great joy knowing the presence of the angel and the empty tomb meant Jesus is alive and well. Of course, when they meet Jesus on the roadside their fear is fully conquered by their joy in seeing Jesus. Joy overcomes fear, especially, when people encounter the living Christ.

Besides the command, “Do not be afraid,” another command is given to the two women by both the angel and Jesus, “Go and tell.” When we encounter and experience the living Christ great joy takes hold of our entire being. This great joy directs us to go and tell the world that Jesus Christ lives. This is illustrated later in the same chapter of Matthew when Jesus commissions the eleven disciples, “Don’t be afraid, I am with you always. Go and tell, making and baptizing disciples of all nations.” (Mt. 28:18-20). Let us not be afraid to tell the story of our Easter joy.

Our Easter story does not stop with an empty tomb. Our resurrection story continues to be lived out within our own baptism as the Apostle Paul depicts in his letter to Romans (6:1-11). The Easter story of Jesus’ resurrection is not just a story of the past to be remembered, nor is it just a story of faith for the future to be recalled when we physically die; Jesus’ resurrection is a story of the present moment, “Dead to Sin. Alive in Christ.” (Rom. 6:11).

Let us walk in the newness of life this Easter morning with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as recorded in Matthew's Gospel.

"Hallelujah! Jesus Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!"

Amen.

**Prayers of Intercessory and Supplication:** (Ask people what they wish to pray for today, briefly inquire about it, and pray for them. Ask them to join in your prayer.)

**The Lord's Prayer:** (Say the prayer in unison.) Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Blessing:** "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)