

Quaking and Moving - Easter Sermon 2026
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SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. **2** And 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. **3** His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. **4** For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. **5** But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. **7** Then 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.” **8** So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

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Every gospel tells Easter their own way, “...because how can you describe what can’t be described?”¹

In Matthew’s recounting of the passion and proclaiming of resurrection, there are a couple of details that strike me, this time around.

The earthquakes, and the running.

¹ Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, page 126.

Earthquakes can either be terrible - when things fall apart - or they can break things open, like when tectonic plates shift and the world re-forms in a new way.

Uh, anyone else feel like the earth is quaking, right now? I mean, everything is shaking. I'm not one to proof-text but I read the headlines every morning with echoes of Jesus:

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places...

That's the destructive kind of earthquake, but there's another force that breaks things open, that transforms.

Let me tell you that first Easter morning, things were shaking. Matthew reminds us the city had been shaking all week. And the earth was *shaking*, that great gettin' up morning. Matthew says, there was a great earthquake, that's Matthew's Easter. We're not talking about a gentle, calm, pastel colored good news, we're talking about something urgent, something shocking, something powerful.

An earthquake of love
so powerful
that when it met the earthquake of terror and destruction
Love. won.

Love wins.

I'm talking about the rising. God overcoming death, the rising, The Way of Love overcoming the March of Death.

Love. wins.

That first Easter the earthquake was so powerful that the guards who were supposed to keep things calm and orderly, the guards who were supposed to keep Jesus buried, the guards whose job it was to block the Way of Life,

those guards fell down in a faint, they fell down flat on the ground, they were done. Because *love wins*.

This is what we've got to cling to when it feels like we're stuck on Friday. Love wins. The earthquake is coming, the stone is going to roll away.

And I tell you, if these are silent, even the stones will cry out.

Easter's coming. The earthquake of love that overcomes - that earthquake is coming.

The earth itself shaking loose the powers of domination and evil.

So this morning I'm thinking about the earthquakes, I'm thinking about the earthquakes that we need, to break things open.

And I'm thinking about *the running*.

Matthew tells us that the Marys - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary - had somewhere to get to.

"So they left the tomb *quickly* with fear and great joy *and ran* to tell his disciples."

The women might have come to the tomb solemn and slow and quiet, but they left the tomb *running*. They ran, quickly, and it was a "flurry of motion...the explosive dawn of new...hope."²

The angel sent them, and "Jesus (the risen Christ, the one who shook up the world in an ultimate way) then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my siblings to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'"

² Topical Lexicon, BibleHub.com

The risen Christ gave them a mission. They got the message. They knew the assignment. So Mary Magdalene and the other Mary *ran*.

They ran because *Love wins*. They ran toward their friends, their siblings, their community, they ran toward the folks who needed the good news. They ran because Love is stronger than death, they ran because the Way of Life ultimately defeats the March of Death, they ran because Christ rose and all who followed his teachings of love and mercy, compassion and justice, needed to know that Christ rose. They ran because the worst thing was not the last thing³, they ran because they had Good News to preach.

With *fear and* great joy, they ran.

Yes, they were still afraid,
still afraid of the powers that practiced crucifixion and terror.

Maybe you are afraid. Maybe you are at the foot of the cross, still.

The Mary's were still afraid,

but Christ rose and so their fear didn't win over their joy, their fear didn't win over excitement, their fear didn't win over determination, their fear didn't win over love.

Carter Heyward says,

“Love is stronger than fear. As history is made, in the smallest moments as well as over the long haul, the power of love cannot be extinguished. This is the message of resurrection, of course, but it is also simply a statement of faith in a power that we have seen or otherwise been touched by in countless, unremarkable ways - our power to live and die and rise again in and through the love of God. This mutually empowering love is the hope of

³ A phrase of Fred Buechner's.

the world. It is what the Jesus story was all about, our Christic power for liberation.”⁴

Folks, the earth is shaking right now, there is an earthquake of destruction, the ground is vibrating with the footfalls of the March of Death, and a lot of us are afraid. And a lot of us feel bound by the Friday of Holy Week, bound by the cross, bound by the tomb.

We’ve got to summon the earthquake of Easter. We’ve got to bring the Way of Life to meet and defeat the March of Death. We’ve got to claim the Love that is stronger than fear, Love that is stronger than death. We have to shake things up. We’ve got to break open the tomb. We’ve got to practice resurrection. We’ve got to find the risen Christ and listen to him,
and then
we’ve got to *run*.

We’ve got to run to tell our siblings that love is greater than fear. We’ve got to run to tell folks there is, *there is, **there is*** Good News in this world. We’ve got to run the direction of the Way of Life.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not, has not, will not overcome it.

We’ve got a mission. We’ve got an assignment. We’ve got a message from the Risen Christ. Love wins. Run and tell:

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed.

Amen.

⁴ Carter Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right*, page 158-159