

Resurrection of Our Lord

THE DAWNING OF NEW LIFE

Matthew 28:1-10

Resurrection of Our Lord

Analysis by Paige G. Evers

1 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; 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 to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

DIAGNOSIS: No Surprises

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Doing What's Expected*

Like the characters up to this point in the story, we've got it

all figured out. Have a dead body to deal with? Do what Joseph of Arimathea did. Wrap it in linen cloth, lay it in a tomb carved in a rock, roll a stone in front of it, and then go away (27:59-60). Nothing more is going to happen. There's no reason to stick around. Worried about the tall tales the crucified Jesus' disciples will tell? Do what Pilate did. Post a guard at the tomb so those wily disciples don't steal their Lord's body and lie about him being raised from the dead (27:62-66). That should take care of any so-called resurrection tomfoolery. Awash in grief and at a loss for what to do next? Do what Mary Magdalene and the other Mary did. They did what was expected. Go to see your loved one's tomb (28:1). You can count on things being peaceful and quiet there. Looking for hope, meaning, or comfort? Do what so many of your friends, co-workers, and neighbors are doing. Do what is conventional. Buy bigger and better goodies for your kids' Easter baskets. Bring your cell phone and laptop to Easter dinner so you can be in touch with the office and get that promotion you've been striving for. You know how the world works. You know what to expect. Nothing surprises you anymore.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Afraid*

What's underneath our certainty that we've got it all figured out? Could it be fear? Despite our attempts to control our lives, things happen that we do not intend and do not want to face. Our hearts are searching for something to trust in. We want something to distract us from our fear. On the one hand, we look to what is conventional, to what everyone else is doing, to guide us through the uncertainties of our daily life. On the other hand, we curve inward. Running away from fear, we rely on our own ability to figure things out. We're certain that any day now, we'll discover the answers within ourselves. As soon as that happens, we trust that all will be well.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *At a Loss*

Curving inward to deal with our fear is like looking into a bottomless pit. There are no answers there. God is the only one who has us figured out. He sees the depth of our sin. He knows that judgment and death are our future. When the guards saw the angel at the tomb they “shook and became like dead men” (v. 4). When we do what is expected and live according to the culture’s conventions, we are dead men (and women). When death comes, we will find out that we don’t have anything figured out after all.

PROGNOSIS: Great Joy

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Saved by the Unexpected*

God is the only one who has us figured out. The good news is that he is also the only one who has figured out what to do about us. God sent his Son to be crucified and then he raised him from the dead (vv. 5-7). On the cross, Jesus took on our sin and death. In exchange, he gave us his righteousness and life. When the earthquake happened at the tomb and the angel appeared, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary’s expectations were shaken (v. 2). Jesus’ quiet tomb, which was supposed to be a place for death, became a megaphone for new life. “He is not here; for he has been raised” (v. 6), the angel announced. God gives forgiveness and eternal life through the death of his Son, Jesus. That’s not how the world is supposed to work. No one would expect that. And yet, that is what God did to redeem us and give us life.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Holding On*

Hearing that great news of Easter, we turn to Jesus. Instead of trusting in social conventions or curving in on ourselves, our hearts take hold of him (v. 9). Jesus’ words, “Do not be afraid” (v. 10), put fear in its place, as something conquered by Christ’s resurrection. Fear, sin, and death don’t lord it over us any more. The empty tomb proclaims God’s victory. We can

cling to that victory and let it, and nothing else, be our guide.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Going Out*

Christ is risen! Follow him as he leads you out from your Easter worship and into the world. Our risen Lord calls us to “go and tell” (v. 10) the resurrection story to others. You can trust that he goes ahead of us (v. 7) to all the places where we go. Invite your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to see the risen Jesus. Tell them this most unexpected and unconventional news: Jesus’ gifts of forgiveness and eternal life are for them. He is a Savior for sinners who haven’t got it all figured out. Jesus died so that they can live. Now there is a surprise that only God could come up with. Jesus, who was crucified, is risen, indeed. Alleluia!